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A NOVEL

BY

COL. RICHARD HENRY SAVAGE

Author of "MY OFFICIAL WIFE," "THE SHIELD OF
HIS HONOR," etc.



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COL. RICHARD HENRY SAVAGE

Author of "My Official War," "The Shield of
His Honor," etc.



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Apr. 16, 1900

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BROUGHT TO BAY

BOOK I.

KITH AND KIN.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE "DREADNAUGHT," AT STAMBOUL.

Julian Hawtrey lazily lifted his head as the sound of the evening gun rolled softly over the glassy waves of the Bosphorus. With a listless eye, he had marked the red flash leap forth from the turret of H. B. M. flagship "Inflexible," and then, the graceful smoke-rings slowly float away toward Prinkipo—those Islands of the Blessed for the Giaour Don Juans à la mode.

The setting sun gilded Pera and Galata; the old Norman tower on the hill gleamed out golden, while, far away to the south, across the silvery streak of the Golden Horn, the slender minarets were penciled in lines of living light. The ensigns of a hundred ships, drooping low, showed the colors of a dozen nations, and scores of boats airily skimmed the blue waters.

From the minarets of Istambol, the musical call of the muezzin sounded softly, for it was the hour of prayer, and the graceful "Dreadnaught" swung idly at her moorings. Soft, dark shadows began to wrap the graceful cypress groves of Seraglio Point, as the daylight faded slowly away. A thin, gray mist drifted up from the Sea of Marmora, and, at last, hid the gloomy cemeteries of Scutari from the young Englishman's gaze.

Lying at his ease—stretched out on a long Japanese

bamboo chair—Hawtrey had forgotten the unfinished “Bass,” and his cheroot was extinguished, for grim cares haunted the proper-looking young Briton.

He laughed cynically as he surveyed the huge, ungainly bulk of the “Inflexible,” anchored far out, her massy steel bulk twisted into shapes of devilish ingenuity for offense and defense.

“We are all here for the same thing, money! It’s the only thing in life, after all!” he murmured.

For, England was now visibly dunning the “Sick Man,” and, Hawtrey was on a quest whose ultimate object was pounds, shillings, and pence.

“Boat ahoy!” sang out the quartermaster on watch, as a smart steam launch, with the official flag of the British embassy, swept alongside.

“Anything new, Avonmore?” demanded Hawtrey, as he strolled to the gangway, regardless of the sailing-master’s wrath at the litter of discarded magazines, worn-out *Times*, and torn letters scattered around the haunt of the cynical landsman, who was the most detested guest on the trim “Dreadnaught.”

“London mail, some telegrams for you—and—look alive now for dinner, old chap, as we are all bidden to the ball at the French Embassy, to-night!”

Avonmore, jolly yachtsman, robust and rosy—“bearded as the pard”—dove down into his cabin, with the easy swing of the “best fellow in England,” a life-enjoying peer, with forty thousand a year—the owner of the graceful four-hundred-ton steamer, whose stanch engines had throbbed on every sea, bearing his private signal from Tangier to Tokio, and from Cape Cod to Cape Town. Avonmore, of the R. Y. C., was also a mighty shekarry!

Captain Julian Hawtrey silently took his bundle of communications, and, with a last sweeping look at the handsomest panorama on earth, sought his guest-cabin in a grim disgust.

Flashing the electric lights, he proceeded to assort his host’s harvest, gleaned at the Legation.

“Same old dun for funds, same raven croakings,” cried the ex-Captain of the Ninth Lancers, hurling a blue cloth envelope across the room, for he had caught the ominous backing, “Walter Addiscombe.”

"Those Temple Bar cormorants must think that I own Aladdin's lamp," he growled.

There were other London letters; two or three bespeaking half-forgotten amourettes, which also fell unheeded on the floor. The folded strips of a couple of telegrams were his first prey, and Hawtrey, with difficulty, picked out the meaning of the dispatches handled by the Moslem telegraphers, perfect only in "English as she is spoke" in the domains of the Sultan.

The first was dated from Damascus, and addressed "On Board Yacht 'Dreadnaught,' Smyrna"; the second was dated at Constantinople, and its brief words roused the discontented man. "He smacks of the business man, this unknown brother of mine," sneered Julian, as he folded the telegrams and slipped them into his cardcase—"Here to meet you—arrange for conference at French Embassy."

"I suppose I can find something out, to-night," mused Hawtrey, verifying the signature, "Raoul Hawtrey," and the date, September 10, 1895.

"He must have followed me on from Damascus," concluded Julian. "I wonder if he is as hard up as I am?"

Then, with reluctance, the society cynic tore open his solicitor's letter, and refreshed his memories as to the cloud of money troubles closing darkly around him. The steward had already tapped twice for dinner before the attentive Soames had finished his master's evening toilet.

There was cheer and women's laughter in the cabin, when Julian Hawtrey, putting up his monocle, wondered at the strange fishes swept into Lord Avonmore's net.

"Same old story," he soliloquized, as he silently bent over his soup, after the perfunctory introductions. "'Gib.', Algiers, Malta, Alexandria, Athens, Smyrna—every pretty woman, on waiting orders, finds her way aboard this Cytherean shallop!"

Hawtrey forgot the attractions of Roberts of the Artillery; Aberford, the calflike Scottish pig iron king; Mortimer Thompson, the London beau, and Le Comte de Beau Rivage—who were playing "chorus"

to the handsome host, a Timon before his fall. And so, Hawtrey wondered not, when Avonmore demurely announced that Grafín Julie Koczi, and the young Princess Sovanoff had joined the yachting party for a hunting-trip along the Illyrian coast—the ladies to be ultimately debarked at Venice, having winter designs upon gay Vienna.

"I have heard that the Hapsburgs are tottering to their fall; now, I know it," growled Hawtrey, acutely marking down these bright-plumaged hawks who had fluttered on board, after their three days' stay "under the walls of Paradise."

"Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest!" laughed Hawtrey, as he accepted Julie Koczi's challenge to another glass of the insidious Pommery a half an hour later. "I can give your cousin, Count Starinski, my cabin, as I must drop off here and take the 'Grand Oriental' for London."

"What's up, Hawtrey?" cried the debonair host, taking his eyes, for a moment, off the audacious displays of Princess Sovanoff's corsage.

"I may have to go over to America," gloomily answered Hawtrey.

"Bears and all that sort of things?" queried Avonmore.

"No!" gruffly replied Hawtrey. "Bulls and all that kind of thing! A lot of us have a million dollars wandering around on four feet, somewhere out in New Mexico, and all I know of it, is the recurrent assessments and that 'Coyote' is the name of the 'vanishing point' of these funds—somewhere in Rio Arriba County, New Mexico."

Julian Hawtrey unbent at Avonmore's kindly "Sorry to lose you, old chap!" and he even furtively pressed the hand of the pretty Muscovite, who modestly whispered, "Take me with you!" But he left the fun at its highest, when he withdrew, saying, "Meet you at the Embassy at eleven! I've got to see a man on shore! And I will tell the two hundred thousand dogs of Pera to spare you and your lovely Giaours."

While Hawtrey, catching a passing caique, was watching the diamond girdle of lights flashing out

upon the blue-crested shores, the Princess Natalie Sovanoff, in whispered queries, drew out Julian Hawtrey's antecedents from the unsuspecting host.

Both the Russian and Austrian social freelances were dark beauties: the one accentuated with the mingled tenderness and audacity of the Russian "dame de société"—the other's face bespoke all the mobile, laughter-loving winsomeness of the Wiener Delilah.

Princess Natalie admired the clean-cut style of the great, blond Englishman—in his prime at thirty—a world-wanderer, whose every movement spoke of the London clubs, and the irritating self-possession of the Briton of race.

And yet, there was a glassy hardness in Julian Hawtrey's blue eyes—there were crafty crow's-feet in their corners—and the thinned scalp spoke of late hours under the fierce lights of Vanity Fair.

"Hawtrey?" sententiously confided Lord Avonmore. "Good sort of fellow—clubman, and all that—Sandhurst man—was some years in the Ninth Lancers—went out, and now, is in all kinds of big projects in the City—on boards of directors, and all that kind of thing."

Madame la Princesse lifted her eyebrows. "Good family?" she listlessly asked.

"Oh! first-rate!" Avonmore answered. "Next heir to Sir Aubrey Hawtrey, of Combermere, Wessexshire—one of our old country families. His father, General Reginald Hawtrey, was in for the title, but he married some *belle inconnue* up in Stockholm, and, by Jove, old Sir Edward, angered, went in for matrimony, late in life—hence, Sir Aubrey. There was some kind of a rumpus, and Julian has a brother whom he never met—sided with the mother, you know. We've been looking him up out here!"

"Raoul Hawtrey, an *École Polytechnique* man," softly answered the Princess. "I met him two years ago, in St. Petersburg—but, he is altogether different. A Frenchman, *par excellence*! Tell me, Lord Avonmore—is he rich—this Julian?"

"I fancy," said the jolly yachtsman, "that Julian is not a Rothschild. It would be different, you know, if

he should step into the family property. Sir Aubrey is thirty-eight, unmarried, and one of the wildest men in London. Burns the candle at both ends, you know!"

Wheretat, the demure Princess at once decided to leave Julian Hawtrey to the tender mercies of that accomplished pigeon-plucker, the Grafín Koczi.

"Poor," she reflected. "Let her have him!" And so the Russian siren lowered her eyes, and murmured, "Tell me of your own place in England! I should so dearly love to see it!"

The two falcons had already "sized up" all the other guests as "not worth Italian powder," with woman's childish aversion to freckles and raw, red hands, passing over Aberford, the Caledonian hobble-dehoy, whose income was several hundred pounds per diem!

Although in the balmy Orient, where many of the commandments are a dead letter, this rich prize in "unkilled veal" drifted out of the clutches of two of the nimblest Dianas, not guiltless, who ever missed a golden Actæon.

Thoughts of this colossal stupidity, in later years almost tempted the pretty pair of pirates to suicide, when, after the unchronicled "hunting trip to Illyria," they learned that Avonmore had saved a possible "Jubilee Juggins" from their slender, blue-veined, bediamonded claws!

All unconscious of the safeguard of Avonmore's disclosures, Julian Hawtrey, selecting a volunteer dragoman, stepped out of the Custom-house landing into an evening medley of the strangest figures on earth. Crowds of veiled women, soldiery, beggars, saucy, kilted Greeks, proud Arnauts, lordly Circassians, squalid children, grave Turks, and heterogeneous foreigners were pouring to and fro over the Pera Bridge.

A thousand diamond lights gleamed out over the exquisite outlines of the four cities; the hundred ships were idly rocking below on the blue and tranquil bay.

From Seraglio Point, the notes of a gay band waltz were wafted—the narrow streets were filled with asses, gayly caparisoned mules, proud chargers,

groaning wains, luxurious carriages, with flashing eyes at their windows; and the cries of the street venders mingled with the hoarse barking of the vast army of dogs, duly marshaled for the night, in their *corps d'armée*, divisions, brigades, and regiments!

It was over several squads of these wistful-eyed, bushy tailed brown "doggies," that Julian Hawtrey was piloted to his carriage, placidly refusing the neighborly offers of German singers, Viennese waltzers, pretty gypsy wantons, and but too transparently disguised European Gulnares!

"I'll make a round of all the clubs and hotels," mused Hawtrey, as his eye curiously sought the lighted interiors, where polyglot beauties lured to their dens the transient tide of shipmen, tourists, sailors, globe-trotters, and the "business subordinates" of the European quarter.

"This is the very dream of a Walpurgis-nacht," mused Hawtrey; "Constantinople by night!"

And yet, though he had a few hundred pounds of his last available ready money in his waistcoat inner pocket, the English ex-Captain, calmly serene in the arrogance of the "British Subject," recked nothing of the dangers of thievish Armenian, man-ensnaring nymph, or prowling Greek.

"I'm all right, if I show up at eleven," he mused, as, at last, he seated himself on the overhanging gallery of the Grand Hotel Victoria, with the faintly outlined Earthly Paradise a thousand feet below him.

Far up the Golden Horn gleamed the red signal lights of the opera-bouffe Turkish fleet—the "stay-at-homes" of the sea, the battleships which never set sail, save for defeat, shipwreck, or some final nautical disgrace. "It's a rum old show, is Constantinople!" mused the Briton.

Hawtrey's mind was far away from the coming ball, or the light-hearted merrymakers, lingering out there on the blue crystal, in the white and gold cabin of the dainty "Dreadnaught."

His solicitors had verified their Cassandra-like croakings. "Ready money I must soon have," bitterly reflected the harassed man, "or be sold out in the Ex-

change—and, then—drop into the place of ‘ penniless gentleman.’ ”

He recalled with wrath the gilded lure of “ The New Mexico Cattle Company, Limited,” which was to have been the pyramidical foundation of his later fortunes.

There was an imperative call for his presence in London in two weeks—at an extraordinary meeting.

The cabled news of the death of their resident manager, Major Howard Gibson (late H. B. M. 44th Regiment of Foot), was alarming, especially as the assistant manager, David Ross, Esq.—better known as “ Texas Dave ”—was on his way to England with important private communications.

“ Just like that duffer Gibson! ” wrathfully mused Hawtrey. “ All he could do was to fall from his horse and get killed. If this American scheme goes to pot, I am dished for life.”

“ Hello, Eulenberg! ” cried the lonely man, as a tall German, bearing every earmark of the diplomat, seated himself at an adjoining table. “ What brings you here? ”

“ Transferred from London,” genially answered the Teuton. “ First Secretary here, now! ”

And, in five minutes, Hawtrey was sharing a bottle of Johannisberger with his quondam London chum, and Monsieur le Comte Armand La Tour, of the French Embassy.

With an affected carelessness, Hawtrey began his investigations as to the brother whom he had never seen—the object of a quaint search.

“ *Tiens! C’est drôle!* ” laughed the Frenchman. “ Raoul Hawtrey and I were classmates at the École Polytechnique. I went out of the army into diplomacy. There was something strange about his citizenship. He left the Corps des Ponts et Chaussées, wandered away to Russia, and—I met him here only yesterday! He has been a mining engineer in Asia Minor. Raoul has been here for a few days with Mahomet Abbas Pasha, the great Turkish Croesus, out at his superb country palace behind Buyukdere. *Il est de votre famille, c’est comme ça?* I am to meet him at the ball, to-night! ”

“ A distant relative,” hastily answered Hawtrey, as

he rose and exchanged cards with his new-made friend. "It's the old story," he laughed. "The whole world meets on the Pera Bridge! I must be off! But, I'll see you later—at the ball. I'm on Avonmore's yacht, the 'Dreadnaught,' and I leave for London in a few days."

The diplomats laughed gayly. "It's only *au revoir*, for we are both bidden to breakfast on board tomorrow! *La Comtesse Koczi, et la belle Princesse Sovanoff y seront aussi! Quelles charmantes dames!*"

Hawtreys smiled as he bowed his adieu. "These young *gobemouches* are a part of the nimbus surrounding these dashing pirates de voyage!" he reflected, as he slowly betook himself to the French Embassy. "Deuced awkward to tell these fellows that I've a brother whom I never met, the son of a mother whom I have never seen! Our lingering in the Greek Sea, around Mitylene and the Isles, allowed him to get back here first! I fancy it would be just as well to keep him out of this gossipy circle, for, our family affairs would be a toothsome morsel for the gossips. I fancy I'll find him a good deal of a Frenchman!"

With restrained impatience, Julian Hawtreys paced the fragrant gardens of the French Embassy, until the grand halls were filled with glittering uniforms and gleaming bosoms.

The merry delegation from the "Dreadnaught," flying four stately victorias, was easily recognizable, for "the invisible spirit of wine" had made them duly jocund.

As the bell of the barrack nearby, tolled eleven Julian Hawtreys signaled to his waiting dragoman, and, stepping out into the steep road, scarpd on the overhanging hillside, entered his carriage and arrived in due state.

In all the crush of the *monde élégant* of Constantinople Hawtreys at last fought his way up to where the Marquis de Veronville and *la charmante Marquise* "received" with all the "suaviter" of the ancient régime.

It was a brilliant salon. The dark, single-breasted coats of the fez-wearing Turkish grandes blazed with

diamond stars and aigrettes which shamed the haughtiest belles of Giaourdom.

A hundred dazzling uniforms, every type of womanly beauty and fashion, delighted the sedate Osmanli dignitaries, who, perched on divans, wondered why "the Christian dogs" exerted themselves to dance, when sprightly beauties could be hired, "at going rates," for unlimited saltatory exercise.

In all this brilliant crush, Hawtreys steady eye sought only for the Count de la Tour.

At last, in the dead angle, between the dancers and the supper-room, Hawtreys flushed his game.

"Ah! *Vous voilà, enfin!*" cheerily cried the young Gaul. "There's your man, over there, just leaving la Princess Sovanoff."

With a bow of thanks, the tall Englishman cut a corner of the dancers, and soon stood beside the object of his three months' search.

"Let us go out in the garden, Monsieur," quietly whispered Julian Hawtreys. "I am the man you wait for here, and I care not for a curious crowd."

"*Tres bien, Monsieur mon frère,*" answered Raoul Hawtreys, with ready aplomb. It was near the great entrance, as they struggled through the crowd, that Hawtreys ran across Lord Avonmore, with the lovely Hungarian Princess Ghika on his arm.

"I'm off for the yacht," nodded Julian, with a sigh of envy, as Avonmore led his beautiful prize out to the dance.

After all the sundered years of their childhood, boyhood, and manhood, the two brothers, tête-à-tête, in the garden, met like two voyagers on an Atlantic liner.

"*Vous fumez?*" hazarded Raoul, politely offering his cigar-case, to which Gallic phrase Julian replied with his curt English "Thanks!" accepting a regalia. By mere self-protective cunning, each brother clung to his native tongue.

"I've had a devil of a time to find you," calmly began Julian, "and, but for the English and French consuls in Asia Minor, I might have missed you. Here's a sealed letter from Monsieur Achille Duprat, No. 5 Rue Paradis, Paris, and we must meet to-morrow and go

over matters. There's some property to divide, you know! I must be off for London, at once."

"*Mais, ou donc?*" placidly remarked Raoul, eyeing his stalwart elder brother with a curiously impassive glance.

"Say that I take a private room at the Royal Hotel Victoria?" answered Julian. "Be there at nine and take breakfast with me! If we can finish our affair, I'll be off for London in the evening train!"

"*Tres bien!*" rejoined the French member of the Hawtrey brotherhood. "*J'y serais à l'heure!*"

"See here, you speak English, don't you?" demanded Julian.

"Perfectly, I hope," smilingly replied Raoul.

"Then, I beg you to keep our affairs secret! I saw you with Princess Sovanoff; I'd rather not have the yacht people know of any of my affairs! And so, you must return to the ball; and I will clear out!"

"I understand! *à demain!*" answered Raoul, as Julian signed to the waiting dragoman, and stalked away to his carriage. It was a strange brotherly meeting.

Raoul Hawtrey stood transfixed at this exhibition of British phlegm, until the carriage rolled away. "*Va! Grèdin d'Anglais!*" he growled, relapsing into a British sneer. "Like father, like son!"

The young French-bred offshoot of the Hawtreys slowly regained the splendid interior, where love and intrigue were now holding high revel.

With a catlike tread, the graceful young man penetrated the throng, until he passed a corner where the courtly old Austrian Ambassador, the Prince Lichtenstein, was bending over the belle of the ball.

A lightning glance of intelligence was exchanged between the Countess Laure Duvernay and the dark-eyed élève of the Polytechnique.

Not even the lynx-eyed Princess Sovanoff, whirling lightly by with the First Secretary, nor the white-coated Austrian dignitary at her side, saw Laure's quick exchange of signals.

Raoul Hawtrey sought a recessed corner in one of the alcoved rooms, where, with feverish hands, he tore open the sealed document of the notary.

It was fully fifteen minutes before he had concluded his careful perusal of the formal letter, and of a filmy sheet, crossed in a woman's hand, which he nervously drew from an inner envelope.

And then, stepping out on an overhanging balcony, he cooled his heated brow in the fragrant breezes blowing from the Sultan's Garden of Eden at the Yildiz Kiosk.

"To Paris; back to Paris!" he muttered, "and Laure, she must go, too. I shall have need of her! And he must never know, *Monsieur mon frère!*"

There were a dozen pairs of bright eyes measuring all the graceful points of the young Frenchman, as he stood moodily leaning against a pillar, his expressive eyes, with veiled restraint, searching that maze of loveliness for the woman whose very lightest mood now ruled his wayward heart.

Raoul Hawtrey, at twenty-six, had not lost the distinguished social manner of the Polytechnique. His handsome face was browned, *en militaire*, with the Orient sun. A figure formed for symmetry and strength well bore off the air of race in his earnest and yet romantic countenance.

Dark, wavy hair, a silken mustache, delicate features, and eyes gleaming like the flow of wintry waters, accentuated the youthful beauty of this French son of an English aristocrat.

Suddenly he glided out, as Madame Laure Duvernay sought a curtained nook to readjust a loosened filmy lace flounce.

"In half an hour, at your villa," he whispered. "It is vital; fortune has come to me. I leave for Paris at once; perhaps to-morrow!"

"And, I?" gasped the beauty, hiding herself behind a Persian portière.

"Must follow, and share both life and fortune!" whispered Raoul.

"I will be there!" murmured the Comtesse Duvernay. "Go, lest we be discovered! Veronville is a very devil of jealousy! I must think it all out, for he must fancy he sends me to Paris! He breakfasts with me to-morrow."

There was a mute pledge of their burning eyes as

Raoul Hawtrey stole away by a gallery opening into the garden, and then Madame la Comtesse glided back, to be rapturously clasped in a *valse à deux temps*, by Starhenstein, the princely Adonis of the Austrian Embassy.

Far below them, as Raoul Hawtrey sought, in the discreet darkness, the jasmin-scented garden of a little hidden villa—while Laure Duvernay's heart leaped up at the thought of Paris, a reopening heaven—the impassive Julian was being ferried out over the sparkling waters to the "Dreadnaught."

"I wonder how this same windfall will cut up!" mused the English brother. "Damn the jackanapes of a notary! He would only talk 'when all the heirs are present,' and this fellow seems to be a French dancing-master! I'll be put hard for time to get to London for the meeting, and he must join me in Paris. Looks like a crafty beggar, by Jove! I'll pump him at the breakfast!"

The hot-hearted man, waiting stealthily there in that jasmin-scented garden for the light-footed beauty stealing away from the ball, had already sworn an oath, deeply cursing the father who gave to them a common name.

"*Pauvre mère*," he growled. "*Je m'en souviens toujours!*" For, it was a legacy of hate, not a bond of love, which had come to the sons of the late Major-General Reginald Hawtrey, C. B., H. M. E. I. Service.

Raoul Hawtrey, lingering in the dense shades of the leafy garden, waited impatiently for the arrival of the beauty whose concealed empire over the courtly Marquis Veronville was known alone to him.

It was a dangerous secret, even for Constantinople, where the red rose bears the color of Love and Death in its blushing bosom.

Too well he knew Laure's adroitness to think of any sudden departure, following his own.

And, even the phlegmatic English brother might be on his trail now! He listened to the nightingale's soft notes, trilling in the cypress groves below, until the wheels of an approaching carriage at last aroused him! There was the gaudy splendor of the dragoman

of the French Embassy flashing out upon the box of the Ambassador's own coupé.

When all was still, Raoul advanced to a dark window, shaded by the overhanging myrtle.

Three slight taps caused the long French sash to swing, and, in a moment, in the hushed night, he felt Laure's heart beating against his own.

"The servants!" he murmured.

"All shut off by the stairway doors, in the stories below. And, my maid is about her vacation!" merrily cried the soi-disant Countess Laure, drawing him into an inner octagonal boudoir, where thick Persian curtains shut off the rest of the jewel-box villa, builded on the slopes of a steep hill, bowered in a charming garden.

"It was so easy!" laughed Laure. "I was waltzing with Lichtenstein; a spasm of the heart trouble seized me. Veronville himself sent me back in his own carriage! Mine was far down the line. And, in the corridor, I had time to whisper, 'I must go to Paris to consult Richepin, the specialist.'"

"'*Carte blanche* you shall have,' he hastily said. 'And, there is a cabal against me; you can counteract them.'"

"Now, *mon amant*, your budget?"

Her ardent lover was kneeling before her, his eager gaze drinking in her loveliness.

"You have been my guiding star, Laure," he passionately cried, kissing the slender hands, from which she had just drawn the long *gants de bal*. "We must combine all for our future benefit! I will see Mahomet Abbas Pasha! I will vaguely hint that the French Government is intriguing with the Russian alliance, again! I must, for your safety, leave first! Abbas will see you at Buyukdere. He will surely send for you! And you can reap a golden harvest from the Sultan's coffers through him. Your rôle is a simple one. It is simply to play off Veronville's mysteries, through the Turkish Embassy at Paris, upon the Sublime Porte here. Mahomet Abbas Pasha will make much of your revelations, if only to strengthen himself! There is our double victory! And you can well afford to risk the campaign!"

He drew out the notary's letter. "I have fallen heir to a handsome sum, in ready money! Over two hundred thousand francs in cash, and, there is a further windfall, to be delivered over to me, in confidence."

Laure bent down and threw her white arms around her lover's neck, kissing him rapturously.

"What must I do?" she murmured.

"Only await me here, to-morrow night, at this same hour! There is one here who is my secret, my hereditary foe! I will have further details at Paris. Duprat dared not risk the confidential documents by mail. The game is to be played out there! We only have Abbas Pasha and Veronville to hoodwink here! We must not be seen together! Settle up your affairs! Let Veronville furnish your journey splendidly. It will give him faith. You can see Richepin, and easily mystify the old expert in diseases of the heart! Abbas Pacha is a child in your hands! You risk nothing with him!

"I will go on, direct by train to Paris, for what spies may not watch me? Your signature will be 'Auguste Lenoir.' A *petit bleu* will reach me at Duprat's! Do not dare to write or telegraph to me in Turkey. Go to the Hotel de l'Aigle at Suresnes, on your reaching Paris. I shall be there to meet you, at the house of my old nurse, a stone's throw away! Then, we will drink the Cup of Love, its rosy-diamond shower, to the last drop!"

"And, your foe?" tremblingly said Laure.

Raoul's face darkened, as he muttered, "*Piano, per mi vendetta!* He shall feel my vengeance in the core of his heart! All this you will learn only at Paris! The curtain raises there on the drama of my life! This is but the prologue!"

"This is the Lurleiberg! And, you are my captive Tannhäuser!" cried Laure, with a smile of ineffably provoking passion. Raoul Hawtrey dreamed alone, over a cigarette of priceless Syrian tobacco, until Madame la Comtesse Laure Duvernay returned, with her exquisite form draped only in a rose-colored peignoir, her rich, brown hair falling in tangled masses over a neck whiter than the snows of Olympus.

The reckless lover had long forgotten to ask whether the vicarious title, or even the name Laure Duvernay, was the legal birthright of this glowing Hebe. Raoul started up at the vision of audacious loveliness. "You are divine to-night, Laure," he rapturously cried.

In the flush of a superb beauty at twenty-three, Laure Duvernay's cheek of rose shamed the fairest beauties of Circassia; the low Greek brows were crowned with the silken aureole of her rippling brown hair, and the wistful, appealing eyes, shaded with their fringing lashes, brought all men to their knees before her.

An Arlesienne in the molded symmetry of her splendid figure, this guileless looking woman crowned her empire with a voice sweet and low as the summer winds.

In music and the dance she had led captive all the virtuosos of the embassies; and even the agnostic, banded critics of the *circle diplomatique*—those marble-hearted foes of woman—reluctantly classed her as *grande dame, jusqu'au bout des ongles!*

And, not even Abbas Pasha, whose vast possessions were scattered from Damascus to the Pruth, and from the Bosphorus to Kars; not Veronville, the master of a mighty secret-service fund; not Kourakin, the wily Russian; nor Lichtenstein, the crafty Austrian, could trace back the strange life-path of the woman who betrayed them all in the passion of her heart for the man who now clasped her in his arms.

The last carriage had rolled away, the rosy flush of the *point du jour* was tinting the far-away purpled Asian hills to the east, when Raoul Hawtrey, a too-willing Samson, had told the fairest of Delilahs the strange story of the fortune which had followed him for two years in his scientific exile in Asia Minor.

But, Hassan, Raoul's faithful slave of years, much marveled when awakened from his sleep before his master's doors at the Croix de Malte. "Rouse me at eight! Have a carriage at half-past eight! I am bidden to breakfast with an English lord at the Victoria, at nine!" drowsily cried the young scientist, as he threw himself down upon his couch.

There was a game of keen wits before him, and, beyond that, the unknown future stretched out, shadowed in gray mists!

"Can I trust Laure?" murmured the handsome adventurer, as his eyes closed. "I must, for she is a part of my own life now! I can not live without her!"

No such misgivings disturbed Laure Duvernay's luxurious slumber! "Paris, with Raoul—a heaven on earth!" She smiled, amid her happy sighs. "*Mais il faut très bien jouer mon rôle ici!*" Veronville is a demon of jealousy, and Abbas, at heart, as cruel as a tiger! Only when at Vienna am I safe, and, even in Paris, there are spies!" And yet, she smiled confidently, for her woman's wit was ready at call, and the game was all her own to make now! "I will conquer!" She smiled as she saw her own mocking loveliness in the glass.

The Swiss Oberkellner of the Royal Hotel Victoria approvingly noted the thorough good form of the two young men who sedately discussed the breakfast, proudly served as a *chef d'œuvre* of Byzantine luxury.

In the golden morning sunlight, Julian Hawtrey, fresh and blond, cool and unruffled, in his tweeds and pith hat with its flowing puggaree, was the very antithesis of the darkly clad, delicate-looking young French Effendi, in his single-breasted frock and fez, with the rosette of the Legion, and a star of the Medjidje, to indicate the grade of Turkish "high life."

The brothers had met in all the calm insouciance of our unemotional modern epoch, each ready to let the other play the leading card.

Julian's stalwart ruggedness, his blunt English manner, had been charmingly met by Raoul's delicate French courtesy.

Secretly regarding each other, like secutor and retiarius, the usual chatter of the Orient carried them up to the cigars and Turkish coffee.

Before they sought a shaded, remote corner on the deserted balcony, with the witching scenes of Istanbul spread out before them, Julian knew briefly the skeleton facts of Raoul's early life.

Educated alone in the country regions of France, going from the *Lycée* to the Polytechnique, with a

brief tour of official service, the young engineer had taken a specialized course in mining, and then, after wanderings in Russia and Circassia, seeking a vulnerable point of the world's unopened oyster, had fallen into the favor of Mahomet Abbas Pasha.

The development of a most valuable iron mine near Damascus, interrupted by Kurdish inroads, and the later flooding of the mine with water, had caused Mahomet to avail himself of the help of syndicated foreign capital, and, of his four years of "wander-jahre," three had been exhausted in his lonely life in Asia Minor, or buried in the obscurity of the Pasha's vast domains.

Raoul felt a secret triumph in closing his recitals, skillfully omitting all his work as a secret political spy upon all the foreign embassies, and his theft of the wavering heart of the woman who was Veronville's unfaithful Egeria, and who, safe in her protected nationality, also tyrannized over Abbas Pasha's smoldering affections.

"It is thus, *Monsieur mon frère*," calmly said Raoul, "that I have ignored for two years the death of our mother, and that the notary's repeated inquiries failed to meet me. As an employee of the higher Turkish nobility, I have been practically cut off from letters, and, naturally avoided the Legations! The Turks are jealous masters! A man simply disappears—and leaves no sign here—when he is suspected!"

Toying with his priceless Oriental rings, dreamily exhaling the blue smoke of his cigarette, Raoul keenly watched his stranger brother. "He thinks that I have been lying to him; bien, let him now lie to me!"

"Naturally," calmly began Julian, "General Hawtrey's long absence in India on service, caused me to grow up a stranger to him. From Eton, rushed off to a preparatory school, then, sent to Sandhurst, I went out later to India, and joined the Ninth Lancers. My father was a man of few words. He was a traveler and globe-trotter after his retirement.

"He died while I was serving in India; his pension ended with him, and, save a very fine collection of arms and a few books of travel and military affairs, he

left me nothing but a collection of choice military medals, hardly enough earned, I will warrant!

"And then, when tired out with the service, I threw up my commission. Returning to London, I lay around the clubs and went in for a lot of things. A few thousand pounds left to me by Sir Everard Hawtrey in the hands of trustees, had grown to twenty thousand or more, before I could reach it, at twenty-five.

"And, I was far away in western America, mixed up in a great cattle company, when this Duprat began to send me these communications. All that I could get from him in Paris, was that, when the other heir was found, he would divide the trust funds properly between us. And hence, the circular letters to all British and French consuls in the Orient to look you up!"

Julian stopped bluntly, and nursed his cigar, furtively eyeing his Gallicized brother.

"The fellow's well enough put up," mused Julian. "Looks as if he could handle a rapier, or show up well in what these queer fellows call 'Le Sport!'"

The elder brother, a burly athlete, little recked that Raoul Hawtrey's vicious rapier and deadly pistol had often been a bitter revelation to the careless antagonists of his wild life in the Orient.

"*Allons enfin!*" briskly said Raoul. "There is but one thing to do! You are en route for London. I will follow you on, at once. It seems, from the notary's brief legal summation of facts, that there is about two hundred thousand francs in gold awaiting each of us, on proof of your identity, and our joint appearance."

Julian was keenly studying his brother's countenance. "This crafty chap is not telling me the whole truth," he reflected.

But, his voice was unruffled as he said, "Did it ever strike you as strange that our parents lived so long apart, for I have never even heard my father mention the existence of our mother, and I have not ever dreamed of your being in this world, until Duprat wrote. It is too late for me to find out anything! General Hawtrey destroyed all his private papers!"

Raoul's voice trembled slightly as he answered,

"And, my mother—our mother—I can only remember as a pale, graceful woman, habitually dressed in black! From my very entrance into the *Lycée*, I have never seen her face again, but, I can remember a serious remark, 'Your father was a general in the English Army, and, he is dead! You belong to me, you are my son, and, a Frenchman!' She never spoke of him! I was not aware of the honor you have done me, in being my brother!"

"It's a gloomy outlook," muttered Julian. "Perhaps the family papers which you may find may enlighten us! Let us bury that dead past! Now, telegraph to me at the Junior United Service Club, Charles Street, London, when you reach Paris, and I'll then run over and see you! I'll bring all my papers, certified at the French Embassy."

A few hours later, jolly Lord Avonmore watched Julian Hawtrey's launch bear the departing traveler away.

"Poor fellow," he sighed. "Short of 'tin,' I'm afraid! Looks all cut up!"

And, sullenly, Julian Hawtrey gazed back at the hills of the Golden City, as the train drew out that night. "This beggarly eight thousand pounds is all I have between me and ruin!" he growled. "I wonder if the French gang are swindling me out of my share in the estate of 'Madame Mystery,' my unknown mother!"

Three days later, Laure Duvernay clung sobbing to her lover, as he followed his elder, in pursuit of the long-delayed legacy. "Trust me, Raoul," she whispered. "Veronville is duped to the last! He has played the prince! And, Abbas Pasha has been fooled to the top of his bent! I follow in two days—then, life and love in Paris is our heritage!"

Snatching the roses from her breast, Raoul broke the spell of her clinging arms! "There is a heaven before you there!" he cried; and then, when at last en route, he cried, "First, her life story; my mother; then, Vengeance!"

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW MEXICO CATTLE COMPANY'S EXTRAORDINARY MEETING—"TEXAS DAVE."

It was only when the "Grand Oriental" had reached Budapest, that valet Soames found his moody master returning to the matter-of-fact activity of intellect which marked the daily life of that wide-awake young Briton, Captain Julian Hawtrey.

Julian had bitterly regretted his treatment *de haut en bas* of the alert young French-bred brother. "I might have drawn him out a bit," mused Julian, with a tardy self-condemnation. "For, now I've only to be satisfied with what they give me!"

And so, he mentally decided to cultivate his unknown fraternal relation a bit on their meeting in Paris.

"Evidently the Governor was a hard-headed old party," mused Julian. "But, I'll look over London a bit on my return." Soames grinned quietly, for he had followed the young Frenchman from the breakfast, and had even watched his last nocturnal tryst with Laure Duvernay.

With a sort of sneaking self-consciousness of forestalling Raoul, the returning yachtsman laid over a day in Paris.

And yet, all in vain, for Monsieur Achille Duprat gazing frostily out of his watery blue eyes, promptly escorted him to the door of No. 5 Rue Paradis, with a wealth of polite flourish and perfunctory salaams.

"The papers—the family archives, *les pièces justificatives*, they are not? I succeeded, Monsieur, to the business of *le feu Ravignol, Notaire*, and, this matter—a compounding deposit of rentes in trust—was an old deposit. As for *la Veuve Hawtrey*, I have no *renseignements*! *Madame est morte, c'est tout l'histoire*. This sum—so considerable—is the proceeds of a lump sum once deposited as an annuity with the *Banque de France*, unused by *Madame*, and so allowed to compound on reinvestment. There are with me no family papers!"

With lame apologies and an invented excuse as to the details of his papers of identification, Julian Hawtrey faced the discomforts of the Channel to enter into the hopeless muddle of his entangled speculations.

"Raoul may have had these papers before—he may have even doubted my identity," grumbled Julian, as he sped up from Folkestone to London. His buoyed-up self-esteem would have suffered had he followed Monsieur Duprat, a quaint figure in a horizontal-brimmed silk tile and huge green umbrella to the *Bureau des Télégraphes*, on his quitting the old Notary's office.

It was at Vienna that the excited Raoul, hurrying on to the Seine, read the words: "English claimant here, demanding family papers. I had none to show. Hurry on. His manner seems suspicious."

"Bravo, Duprat!" gayly cried Raoul. "So, my English brother is heir to his father's cool brutality! I was right to deny all knowledge! For, now, Duprat's denying all knowledge of the family will back up my prudent lying! For, a lie, to succeed, must be well stuck to."

And, again, Raoul blessed himself that he had lured that *fine mouche*, Laure Duvernay, on to Paris.

"She can aid me to trap him!" he mused.

It had been a happy thought, his own first telegram from Stamboul to old Duprat to bury forever the history of *feu Madame la Générale Hawtrey* from the inquisitive English co-heir.

"Brave *vieillard*!" proudly cried Raoul, with a profound gratitude for the services of the old Notary, who had been the only visitor—the sole "Greek bearing gifts"—of his schoolboy days at the *Lycée*, and his adolescent years at the Polytechnique.

"There must have been some secret reason for old Duprat's slavish devotion to my mother," mused Raoul. "A youthful passion—an unhappy one—an unrewarded love! For, it is only that which is faithful across the frail bridge of declining years! True to the last, because unsuccessful!"

And yet, a practical man of the world, Raoul's heart bounded in joy! "I score the first trick! It was adroit to wire Duprat to ignore all knowledge of me

save the mere catalogue of the Polytechnique. For *ce chien d'Anglais* would have undermined me, from the first! Now I am armed, at all points! And, perhaps, Laure shall yet trap him—for me!”

The young world-wanderer dashed homeward on the next train.

For, in the faded letter traced by a mother's hand, was the promise of the unfolding of the mystery which had kept General Reginald Hawtrey and his wife sundered for twenty years—a legacy of hate which had stamped the dissimilar sons as aliens to each other, though of the same natal blood!

Two days after his Parisian discomfiture, Julian Hawtrey, pacing down Piccadilly, was revolving plans for exploiting some of General Hawtrey's surviving chums at the Junior United Service.

Even amid his cares as “promoter,” and tinkering the architecture of his shattered fortunes, the dissatisfied man now yearned for light upon his parental history. “There must be some old fellows, yet extant, who would remember the faded gossip of that time,” mused Julian.

It struck him now as singular that no picture of his unknown mother had survived the General's demise.

In this quandary, the tall young fellow breasted the human tide, in proper silk hat, umbrella of classic slimness, and Prince Albert—rose and all—unconscious of many a flattering glance.

“By Jove!” was the exclamation as he collided with a pedestrian sauntering solemnly westward. Julian's features relaxed, as he good-humoredly murmured an apology and exclaimed: “The very man of all others whom I wished to see! I must have five minutes with you!”

“Come over to the Carlton, then!” gasped Sir Aubrey Hawtrey, putting up his monocle. “That will give me time to catch my breath. Where on earth have you been? You are as brown as a Bedouin.”

Once within the club, over a brandy and soda in the smoking-room, Julian briefly sketched his yachting trip, adroitly leaving out all reference to the recently discovered brother.

With a secret exultation, he noted the greenish pal-

lor of the Baronet's face and the tremulous grasp of the crystal glass containing the young nobleman's insidious comforter, absinthe. Sir Aubrey's set was the very fastest in London, and even his twenty thousand a year was not up to the limit of his "High Life."

"And you?" demanded the heir-presumptive, when he had finished his own crafty recital.

"Knocking about Paris, a run to Monte Carlo, a few weeks in Vienna—the old thing," testily replied Sir Aubrey, whose keen eye had noted Julian's critical survey of his physical condition.

Pale, thin-chested, with straggling hair and wasted limbs, the possessor of the title did not look to be an heir to old Parr's sheaf of ripened years.

"You're sizing me up, old chap! You may come in for the property some of these days; but, after all, it's only a matter of relative position! Now, with your well-known ascetic tastes, and my money, I'll give you ten to one you won't live two years! Mark that in your betting-book—only," he snarled. "I won't be here to pay you! Never mind! *C'est bien egal!* You'll have your fling! Now—what can I do for you?"

The wary Sir Aubrey half closed his eyes and whistled softly when Julian bluntly demanded some news of the late General Hawtrey's private life.

"You know what Sir Everard was—my Governor, a close enough old man—embittered and soured. He led my lady mother a devil of a life! And, I fancy that the General was of the same genial mold! We, none of us, wear our hearts on our sleeve!"

After a fit of racking coughing, followed by a second absinthe, the owner of splendid Combermere spoke out frankly enough. "All I can tell you is that my father and yours were once great cronies—till, as usual, a woman came between them! Major Reginald Hawtrey was our military attaché at Stockholm after the Crimean war. Sir Everard went salmon fishing in Norway, and he sailed around to Stockholm in his famous old yacht 'Corsair' to see his kinsman. Now, it happened that a beautiful French singer was, at that time, the reigning divinity. Whatever her name was, I've really forgotten. '*La Mystérieuse*' is the only

name I've heard the Governor ever use. He wanted to carry her off, a prize, a mere hostage of Venus! By gad, Sir, for once, money did not carry the day! She married Major Reginald. To do the lady in question justice," quickly added Sir Aubrey, noting Julian's flaming cheeks, "she was far above the tongue of calumny. The embittered cousins never spoke afterward. My father was no marrying man, but, in sheer spite, after your birth, he wedded his nearest neighbor's half-consumptive only child, and so doubled the estate, wrecked his happiness, and, gave me this heritage of anæmic misery! Damn the whole business! Your side of the house will have the doubled estates—some day!"

"And, my father and mother?" breathlessly demanded Julian.

"There I'm stumped," carelessly answered Sir Aubrey. "Old Wilkinson, my father's head gamekeeper, who taught me to ride and shoot, told me all that I know. The old man is grumbling over his pipe and mug, now, down at Combermere. All that I could ever gather—for, frankly, I cared little—was that your father had some final and fatal quarrel with the mysterious beauty. He took her first child away—you are that interesting object. He then left her forever, went to India, came back and died after his promotion and retirement, a thorough woman-hater, like my Governor. Though my own mother was dead, and yours living, a recluse, I believe, in some French convent, the estranged kinsmen never met again. The same woman doomed them both to a bitter old age! And yet, I fancy they were hard parties to put up with!"

Sir Aubrey's longest recorded speech led up to a third absinthe.

"That's all?" cried Julian, in a dissatisfied tone.

"Yes!" grumbled Sir Aubrey, pulling out his watch. "I've to leave you now! Positive engagement! Stay!" he cried, with a sudden gleam of recollection. "There's a woman's picture—I found it behind a moving panel of Sir Everard's favorite writing-desk. The painter's name and the words 'Stockholm, 1857,' give the only clew! I'll write to old Marbury,

my house steward, to pack it carefully and send it to you at your club! What do you know of this?"

"Absolutely nothing!" blankly answered Julian. "My father died mute, and destroyed every bit of his personal life records, before his final seizure."

"Well, you have my whole budget!" cried Sir Aubrey, as he led his visitor out of the Club, and then disappeared into a four-wheeler. "I'd have you for dinner, but I'm off to-night for Paris for a month. They tell me that I must consult old Richepin, the specialist."

Julian, disappointed at the meager disclosures, watched the disappearing cab with an ill-concealed hostility.

"Purse-proud cad!" he sneered; and then, swinging his umbrella viciously, he marched on his way, quickened with a new thought! "If this eight thousand pounds is well handled, it may tide me over till this callous brute finishes his course of absinthe! *Et après*, there is life, real life, before me then, wealth, Parliament, and an advantageous marriage!"

He sat late that night working over his tangled papers, and girded his loins for the struggle of the morrow, when the New Mexico Cattle Company's dismal affairs should be dragged out for an unwelcome ventilation in the foggy atmosphere of the city.

"Six months' grace! By Heavens, I'll soon drop into twenty thousand a year, and one of the finest old places in England!" The wearied-out schemer fell into a happy slumber.

That night he dreamed of the shadowy face of *La Mysterieuse*, the bright-eyed daughter of France—the strange woman who had left only misery and unhappiness behind her.

"There's the secret of old Sir Everard leaving me only the few beggarly thousand pounds! Her picture was hidden in his desk till the day of his death! Her child was the recipient of his only gift. He hated her hard heart! After all, he loved her—poor old duffer! Truly, *La Mysterieuse*—for this starveling son dreams not, even now, of Monsieur Raoul's existence! He shall never know—if I can prevent it! There is yet an unsolved mystery across the Channel! *Monsieur*

mon frère may be some other man's child, and—poor old dad—perhaps he was duped and tricked by a pretty adventuress! My future lies in old England, and my crown at Combermere! I'll hold this French chap off at arm's length."

Mr Julian Hawtrey, one of the board of three managing directors of the New Mexico Cattle Company (Limited), of London, England, and Coyote, Rio Arriba County, New Mexico, U. S. A., was the very acme of financial sobriety as he took his seat at the directors' table the next day.

It was a depressing, foggy afternoon, and the streets of London at 2 p. m. were filled with sad-faced men, apparently muzzled, and fiercely trying to bite through their hideous respirators.

It was a gloomy enough meeting, a gloomy subject to discuss (that of a serious deficit), and a most gloomy proposal—of an assessment of five shillings on the pound to merely carry on the unsuccessful affairs of the crippled company.

The company's offices on Ludgate Circus were now crowded with anxious widows, half-pay officers, economical clergymen, and a burly minority of red-faced tradesmen who had been lured into the splendid scheme so hopefully launched five years before.

But the "Texas bull" had not materialized into golden sovereigns, and Julian Hawtrey, with a calm financial forethought, arrived a good half an hour late.

Murmurs of disapprobation followed the appearance of the man who had allowed his two disgruntled fellow-committeemen to briefly announce the tidings of a financial Battle of Cannæ to the irate British investor! He alone, of all the officers, had visited the alluring mèsas of New Mexico which they had vainly plated with British gold!

With considerable sly cunning, Hawtrey had allowed the chairman, Sir John Bingo, K.C.B., of Rosebank Lodge, Southsea, to announce the untoward news of the death of Manager Gibson, and the presence of Assistant Manager David Ross, of Texas.

There were loud cries of "Hear! Hear!" when the Chairman stated that Committeeman Hawtrey would follow the Texan envoy in a few explanatory remarks.

Julian sedately shook hands with the stranger, who, modestly but manfully, "faced the music."

"Texas Dave" was a short, stocky man of hardened muscle, clad in a gray knockabout suit, his earnest, careworn countenance betokening much dodging of "Comanches" and apprehensive watching of men's pistol hands.

His face was coppery-brown, save the fair forehead under the broad-brimmed sombrero which he clung to. A sandy mustache and defiant "goatee" gave an air of grim determination to his features, his turn-down collar and "cowboy" tie betokening his scorn of "Poole's beauty-giving gentlemen's outfits!"

Straightforward and manly, the Texan related the almost insensible business changes of the last five years.

The rise in price of stock cattle, the gradual fencing up of the great Texan prairies, the growing barbed-wire inclosures, cutting off free pasture, and the priceless water—all these were truthfully set out.

The greater distance in driving to market, due to a removal across the Texan line into New Mexico, the enormous expenses of men (experienced vaqueros), "to work the cattle" and protect the herds; the tyranny of the great butchering trusts, and the greed of the railway tyrants—all these discouraging features were set out, in accents which forced conviction.

Julian Hawtrey closely eyed the three or four hundred stockholders who had looked to him as a responsible agent and a protector of the two hundred thousand pounds capital which now seemed to be "permanently exiled."

When "Texas Dave" paused at last, the frontiersman took a drink of water from that pitcher and tumbler which is one of the shining ornaments of all public meetings.

"Is there any investor who would like to ask me any questions?" Ross asked, mopping his burning forehead with a trailing bandanna. The hawk-eyed "cow-puncher" was more rattled than his brave old father leading his Texans into Battery Robinett, at Van Dorn's Waterloo of Corinth!

Economical of words, "Texas Dave" had account-

ed for the late Major Gibson as "bucked off his horse, and got his neck broke clean off! Died on the ground!"

Evidently there was nothing to look for, *ex parte* Gibson, and so, a wild chorus of discontent arose:

"What's to be done? Tell us!"

With self-deprecation, Texas Dave glanced behind him to see if the well-fed directors had not stampeded. "Durn the whole lot!" mused Dave, gazing angrily on the bald-headed band of well-dressed aristocrats, the incapables who had drawn their fat salaries regularly. "These old chaps get all the money, and that other outfit get all the experience.

"I had a-wanted to talk this thing over with Cunnel Hawtrey," he said, slowly, with a reproachful glance at the suave Julian. "But, I'll just shoot the proposition out to you! Now, there's Don Andr s Armijo—the biggest sheep-owner in New Mexico—has a ranch of fifty square leagues in Valencia and Bernalillo Counties, well watered and grassed. He's got the land and water to graze two hundred thousand head of cattle, and he doesn't want it to be ruined by sheep! Our own lands in Rio Arriba we were badly stuck on. They're short of water and filled up with gramma grass—and, it's only good for sheep! Now, Don Andr s proposes to swap, herd for herd, taking our cattle as they run, at fifteen dollars, and giving us half-bred sheep, at three. He will pay off all the company's floating debt, and turn over his Mexican herders at ten dollars a month to replace our stockmen at thirty. The 'pastores' all work afoot! Sending a good man out there, buying two hundred good Merino rams, and changing your cattle operation into a sheep-raising company, suspending all extra expenses, in two years, you'll be more than square! In five years, you can pay a handsome dividend for the last three, and also save all your investment.

"And there's but one man able to put this deal through—that's Cunnel Hawtrey!"

The simple Western frontiersman had succinctly covered the whole subject—and his honest, straightforward manner went to all hearts.

An orphan lad, a graduate of King's Santa Ger-

trudes Ranch, "Texas Dave," who neither used oaths, liquor, nor tobacco—a cowboy who never had played a card—was the very antithesis of the frontier desperado, though he sighed often that he had been forced to abridge the lives of several denizens of the West, in sheer self-defense.

When he handed up Don Andrès Armijo's letter of reference to the richest London banker and a bundle of formal documents, there was a hum of awakened interest.

Loud cries of "Hawtreys! Hawtreys! Let us hear from him!" arose, with many interpolations. "Give the Committee power, and let Captain Hawtreys go out!"

But Julian, deprecating his Texan promotion to "Cunel," hung back, until "Texas Dave" led him a moment aside into the little anteroom. The Texan's eyes were filled with a burning anxiety. "You must go out with me! You are the only man who can do it! Talk up to them! And, I have got a 'dead thing' for you to make a million 'on the side,' in something else!"

"What is it?" eagerly cried Julian, his cupidity at once aroused.

There was no self-deception in that resolute face! No glassy glare of the dreamer in those steady eyes. "I'll only tell you to-night, at your own shebang, alone!" seriously said Texas Dave! "An' it costs just ten thousand dollars to come in! That's the blind!"

"I'll see you to-morrow," craftily said Hawtreys.

"There's no time to lose!" said Texas Dave. "I've got a letter from old Armijo to his bankers! I'd a let him in first, but he's a 'greaser.' I'm dead set agin all Mexicans—though Don Andrès is square."

"What is it? Speak!" excitedly cried Julian, carried away by Texas Dave's sang-froid.

"It's a hidden mine!" said the stockman. "One I found, while out hunting some Apache Injuns that had run off some fat beeves! We killed a dozen of them!" calmly said Dave, referring, ungrammatically but decidedly, to the "Injuns," not the beeves!

"Gold or silver? Which?" breathlessly cried Hawtrey, as the stamping of feet called him back.

"Neither!" calmly answered Dave. "It's a sure thing! Can't you trust me for ten thousand dollars? I never lied to any man in my life!"

"It's done!" whispered Hawtrey, a sudden wave of conviction sweeping him off his feet. He was in the presence of a manly nature which dominated his own crafty soul.

Returning to the hall, Julian Hawtrey took up the presentment of the Assistant Manager, and, in a lucid speech of an hour, supported Assistant Manager Ross's daring proposition.

When the last puffing Briton filed out of the hall, a rising vote had supported the assessment, and a new member of the Executive Committee had been named. Julian Hawtrey, Esq., had been selected as manager, vice Gibson—"bucked off, and broke his neck square off"—with a thousand pounds' allowance for a special visit and a report upon the whole transaction—"Texas Dave" to be continued in his trusted place. A Special Report, with a final ratification meeting, was arranged for, and then, four hundred damp umbrellas being opened, the British Investors scattered homeward, to dream of fibers of fine wool and haunches of fat mutton turning into gold—after these five long, weary years! They had served for the forbidding and unprofitable Leah, and they now looked forward to the capture of the profitable and delightful Rachel! For, beef was down, and wool and mutton were the watchwords of long-deferred fortune.

Calmly philosophical as to others' interests, Captain Julian Hawtrey was now most keenly alive to his own! He had recouped in twenty "turns," and in salary, his own small "paper" investment in the patriarchal herds of the company. But, the mine whetted his curiosity!

And so, he did not lose Texas Dave a moment from "earshot" until they departed together, with an agreement to meet the new Executive Committee for funds and orders in a week.

The staid elegance of the United Service Club would be terrifying to Texas Dave, and so Julian decided to

dine his Fidus Achates at the Charing Cross Hotel, and spend the evening with the Texan at his own rooms in the modest Princess' Hotel on the Strand.

"I've got the stuff there," seriously said Dave, "both in the ore and in the metal, to show you. And, I took up and paid for the whole section, a mile square, around the mine! I got a fellow secretly made Deputy United States Surveyor for that. I kep' him drunk all the way going out, and he was 'blind-full' all the way back! Thar's dead loads of water, an' heavy pine timber to make charcoal for fifty years! I kin get the Navajo and Jicarilla Apache Injuns—all you want—to work them, for five dollars a month an' their grub!"

"So, the title is secure!" cried the overjoyed Hawtrey.

"Yes, Sir-ee!" frankly answered Texas Dave. "I've got a chap camping on it now, with two friendly Injuns—he's the brother of the girl that I'm goin' to marry! That's what I want the ten thousand dollars for!" said Dave. "I'll put a bunch of sheep in them mountains, and then be a rich man in ten years! So, I'll get married and settle down at Coyote, while you can run this mine!"

In vain, throughout the long dinner at the stately Charing Cross Hotel, did Julian try to get Amontillado or the sparkling "fizz" across the Texan's thin, resolute lips!

"I'm on business, Cunnel," he said, "an' drinkin' is only for politicians, an' army officers, an' fancy men! It makes a thick head, an' a quarrelsome tongue!"

In the half an hour following the superb repast, while Hawtrey smoked his digestive cigar, he pondered over the rashness of engaging a quarter of his Parisian legacy in this wild story of a hidden mine! "If there should be anything in this cock and bull story," mused Julian, "and this man is absolutely truthful, I might have use for this new-found brother of mine over the Channel! Monsieur Raoul Hawtrey seems to be an expert mining engineer; he has his own windfall to invest, and, he is footloose! I think that I'll just 'tole' Texas Dave over to Paris—story, samples, and all! And, that will keep him away from

Señor Andrés Armijo's bankers here! At any rate, I can easily recoup myself for the trip from the company's resources! For, these stockholders are fat enough sheep still to be sheared a little closer! And—if there really is a mine—Raoul may be of use! Can I trust him?"

The London aristocrat smiled, in pitying apprehension of Texas Dave's possible fate in Paris, when the plainsman startled him by saying: "See here, Cunnel, your ladies are right sociable here in London. Here's a half a dozen have nodded and smiled to me, and yet, I don't know a single soul in London!"

Whereat Hawtrey piloted the innocent cowboy out of the evening crowd of anonymas, and followed him into his own modest chamber in the Princess's.

It was piled high with strange gear and luggage, and several heavy-looking boxes!

"That's not all my own plunder!" said the free-hearted Texan! "I brought Major Gibson's stuff home to his friends! Yes, Sir! Thar's the very same smooth English saddle he was bucked off from—but here, Cunnel, in these boxes, is the real stuff—a fortune—for you and me!"

The vaquero kicked two or three heavy cases.

"Tell me now!" cried the eager Hawtrey.

"You're in this for ten thousand dollars to start, and we go in half an' half alike!" said Dave.

"Yes!" firmly said Julian, led on by an uncontrollable faith in the man's honesty. "Ill give you the cash in Paris! We'll go over there to-morrow night!" he said, slowly, bethinking himself of Raoul's telegram, just received: "Arrived. Waiting at Notary's for you."

"Shake, honest Injun!" solemnly said the Texan, putting out a bronzed hand.

Julian accepted the simple ratification of the plainsman's simple frontier code.

"It's copper," said Texas Dave. "I've got an inexhaustible mine of it in the Painted Mountains, in the Hermosa Range. The stuff was so heavy, I guessed first that it was silver, but I tried seven lots of two hundred pounds each, under a three days' fire of fat pine knots! An' it runs fifty pounds to the two hun-

dred, in rough, lump copper! An' the matte is worth eighteen cents a pound at the station. I had the metal assayed—an' there's big silver in it, besides!"

Julian Hawtrey panted in eagerness till the burly hotel porter broke open the cases which were dragged out from under the gear of the late Major Gibson.

"Thar you are," triumphantly cried Dave. "Thar's your ore—all even grade, the whole outfit—and thar's your real stuff—just the red metal!"

"Is there much of this?" cried Julian.

"A derved big mountain to begin on," calmly answered Dave. "Thar's the lode, six or eight feet thick, and it's open for a quarter of a mile! I reckon thar's a hundred thousand tons in sight!"

Julian affected to recover his lost sang-froid.

He said, patronizingly: "I'll examine all this to-morrow morning! And we'll take a fair case of each over with us! To-morrow night we will go over to Paris, and I will have a man there who is up to all this thing."

"I hain't exaggerated!" said Texas Dave, in a modest triumph! "Thar's all the money we will ever need there, just waiting for us; an' the title is safe in the First National Bank of Santa Fé! It's a whack!"

By which obscure expression the vaquero indicated his idea that the "trade" was a "fait accompli."

It was late before the cautious Englishman left the plainsman to his unruffled slumbers.

In the three hours of their long conference, Julian Hawtrey learned to admire the concise, manly vigor of the vaquero's views.

"Texas Dave" was a marked exemplar of those self-contained Western centaurs who know a few things very well.

The simple lore of the stockman, the unerring self-confidence of the prairie rover, the practiced arts of the observant scout, with the native energy of his character, made up a picturesque individuality tempered with the strong religious flavor which characterizes the border state Southrons.

From "St. Joe" to Salt Lake, from Galveston to El Paso, from Albuquerque to San Diego, "Texas Dave" was known as a "man to be to!"

"I must not let these London fellows get hold of my rough diamond!" mused Hawtrey; and so, under the pretense of removing the dead "Major Gibson's stuff," Julian arranged to send his man "Soames" down at breakfast-time to remain with Dave Ross until Hawtrey would join him for a private conference "on ways and means," with the new Managing Committee of the Cattle Company.

"I'll meet him here at eight, Cunnel," said Dave, "but I'm out at 'sun up' and knock about the streets a bit. Why, dern my buttons, a gang of Comanches would raid your big encampment here before you wake any morning. Thar's nobody stirring till about nine o'clock. Regular prairie dogs for sleeping."

With a last "shake hands" they parted for the night, Hawtrey feeling his game secure as he was rattled away to his chambers. "I'll get him over the Channel to-morrow evening. In Paris, 'Texas Dave' will be handicapped by a strange language," mused Julian, "and, when I pay him the money—if my French brother approves—I can quickly have him tied up in a contract at the American Consulate General.

"I wonder what strange fate is leading me out into those Western wilds!" mused Julian, as Soames opened the door of his cozy lodgings—a permanent pied à terre, known to many of the artistic set, as well as certain fair ones who drifted noiselessly up and down the stair.

"Parcel for you, Sir," soberly said Soames. "Just arrived—compliments of Sir Aubrey Hawtrey."

"The drunken beggar is a man of his word," grumbled Julian, "although he is a heartless human snake."

The acute clubman well knew why his kinsman had hastened to deliver the mysterious picture, for he could easily recognize the character of the sealed package deposited on his table.

"Sir Aubrey does not wish me to fall foul of old Wilkinson and cross-question him, and so rattle up the family skeletons! That is why he has been so prompt! But, my dear boy, you do not know me!" cynically soliloquized the crafty Julian. "I have too much pride to stoop to your kitchen councils! And, if I ever cross

the lodge gates of Combermere, it will be as Sir Julian—for this little, puny beggar can't last long! Baccarat, beauty, and absinthe will soon do for him! I wish to heaven that some Parisian 'rodeur' would chuck him in the Seine!"

The envious heir-presumptive tossed away a half-dozen letters. "Duns," he growled, "or, 'dispatches from the Court of Venus!'"

It was true that several anxious-eyed fair ones had already noted, from Soames's rehabilitation of the long-deserted rooms, that

"The Sultan Shah Jehan

Was, once more, in his palace at Ispahan,"

and so, had showered in these premonitions of their impending descent upon the sly bachelor, who "moved in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform"!

"There," grimly said Julian, when alone, "lies the whole secret of the kinsmen's quarrel—this faded picture of a beauty long fled! But for my father's foolish foreign marriage—but for his crossing old Sir Everard in love, and offering her marriage in place of the richer man's jewels—Reginald Hawtrey would have brought Combermere and the title into our branch of the family! And, I will have them back, by fair means or foul, if I can achieve it; if only to revenge myself on this French interloper who balked the fair fortunes of my old soldier father! And yet, Aubrey spoke of but one child; the quarrel probably began with the advent of the other chap!"

With a deft care, the moody speculator opened the case.

A cold egoist, he stood, spellbound, before the beauty of the revealed face!

"La Mystérieuse!" he murmured, seeing, for the first time, the face of the woman to whom he owed his life! She was surely beautiful enough to set those worldly men at odds!

"That's true; and, damn it, it's easy to see where my French-bred brother gets his good looks! He shall not see this—until he has told me her whole story! The quarrel—there must have been some other man mixed up in it!"

All unmoved, the callous-hearted son gazed upon

that queenly face; the noble head accentuated by a gray background; the exquisite shoulders covered by a mantle which suggested some favorite character.

There was neither jewel nor ornament, nothing to heighten the thrilling beauty which had been a cause of the deadly quarrel a long generation before.

And, keenly conscious of his brother's handsome exterior, Julian felt a dumb hatred growing up for the man now waiting for him across the silver streak.

"*À bon chat, bon rat!*" he murmured. "I will make use of my Gallic brother! He shall be my stepping-stone to fortune!"

Locking away the half-size oval in an old cabinet—proof even against even the sly Soames—Julian lay down to dream of strange happenings which should bear him on to be the head of the ancient house.

With a quick decision, he had wired the news of his coming to Raoul at Paris, and had bidden Soames pack his luggage for a three days' stay. "I shall leave you here, Soames," remarked the master. "I am taking only a flying trip to Paris."

"Damn his stinginess," grunted Soames. "I'll get even with him yet! I'm on to the whole story of the other fellow and his French countess!"

Energetic and far-seeing, Julian Hawtrey had dispatched two considerable samples of the ore to London metallurgists, and two samples of the copper matte to the best assayers, for a determination of percentage of their copper and silver, before he joined "Texas Dave" in a long discussion of the Cattle Company's metamorphosis with the now jubilant Executive Committee.

The "way out" seemed to be clear to all now, and the new quest for the "Golden Fleece" was substantially lined out long before the two strangely assorted partners left for Dover.

That night, while the plainsman writhed under the wild wrestling of the Channel billows, Julian walked the tossing deck, his mind busied with vague dreams of a golden future.

There was a case of the ore and abundant samples of the metal with the voyagers, on board, to be subjected to the crucial Parisian tests, and, craving rank,

family prestige, and the honors robbed from him by the unfortunate French beauty, Julian Hawtrey's mind clung to the irritating subject of his nearness to the title.

"If I could only get the little beggar out there—away from civilization, out there on the plains—something might happen to him!" mused the reckless man of the world. "No, damn it! that might lead up to me! I must look him up here in Paris! It may be that he can be helped along a bit!"

He knew, by Sir Aubrey's P.P.C. card, that the sybarite who comfortably got rid of twenty thousand a year had preceded him.

Sly and wise in his own conceit, Julian Hawtrey would have shuddered had he fathomed the dark designs of the two lovers now hidden in the Hotel de l'Aigle at Suresnes!

For, Raoul Hawtrey had received the *petit bleu* from the overjoyed notary, Duprat.

And, Laure Duvernay was learning from her rapturous lover the first lessons of how to weave her spider's webs to entrap her lover's most deadly foe.

Raoul now had, with feverish anxiety, read his mother's long-sealed diary. When he received the news of Julian's coming, he smiled grimly. "*Je payerai tout l'accompte, avec un bon intérêt!*"

CHAPTER III.

AT THE HOTEL MEURICE—A BROTHERLY COMPACT.

When Julian Hawtrey (an old convive), was obsequiously received at the Hotel Meurice, the shades of evening were falling. "Texas Dave" had been singularly quiet during the long railway run from Calais. He was perfectly willing to anchor himself for the night at Numero 228 Rue de Rivoli.

"It's a strange outfit," he quaintly remarked. "Mighty few people here seem to know how to speak English, an' I don't wonder, if that big creek is always

bilin' over like last night, that they don't go over to London to learn."

And, strangely, the man whose iron thews were proof against a thousand miles' horseback prairie jaunt, "kinder smiled a sickly smile, an' curled up on the floor, an' the subsequent proceedin's interested him no more."

It gave the plotting promoter a quiet evening free to arrange his own crafty moves. There was, first, to cause a private examination of the ores and metals by the expert, Raoul Hawtrey, before he should meet the plainsman on business, and then, to arrange for watching over the unsophisticated visitor. These were both intrusted to the head porter, who was an old servitor of *Monsieur le Capitaine Hawtrey*.

The wily Frenchman laughed as he pocketed a louis, with injunctions to have a discreet *garçon* follow on, should David Ross, of Rio Arriba County, New Mexico, undertake to personally exploit the "snares and pitfalls" of Paris.

"See that nothing happens to him, Gregoire," calmly said the Englishman. "*C'est un philosophe sauvage—au naturel!*"

The half of the ores and metals brought over were to be dispatched by commissionaire to the office of Monsieur Achille Duprat, Notary, 5 Rue Paradis.

"My brother, the savant, shall not meet 'Texas Dave' until he has given his unbiased verdict upon the useful 'bonanza.' From Dave's story there is enough metal to furnish France for a century with five and ten centime pieces."

The selection of a secret agent to look after Sir Aubrey Hawtrey, and the finding of a man to "shadow" his brother Raoul, were matters to be arranged through a confidential legal friend, one who had eased off several frictional episodes of Julian's wild "salad days" in gay Lutetia.

But the selection of the proper French firm to assay the ores and metals, needed a conference with his leading ally in France, a burly Semitic "finanz-baron," who was a perfect Dionysius's ear as to all happenings on the Seine.

Julian was delighted at the telegram which awaited

him from the romantically discovered brother: "Will await you at ten at the notary's. Funds now ready for division."

"I wonder if I can discover from this Benjamin of my father's frosty old age, the secret of that quarrel between our parents, and the name of the man who came between them? For, the laws of probability clearly indicate a Frenchman, probably some man of rank and wealth! And, with the slyness of the actress, whatever secrets 'La Mysterieuse' successfully concealed from her husband and the world, will be hidden from me! I will speak to this Raoul, 'fair and softly!' I am in his hands now; some day he may be in my power! And, then, he shall learn to talk!"

It happened, strangely, at this very time, at the Hotel de l'Aigle, at Suresnes, Raoul was gazing fondly into Laure Duvernay's eyes. "Trust to me, *ma mignonne!*" the dark lover whispered. "I have learned all the lessons of the Orient! *Mon frère* Julian shall make the game, and, I only follow on!"

It was easy in the morning for Julian Hawtrey to send the unsuspecting plainsman around Paris, on a "personally conducted" forty-franc "tour," with a valet de place to "tow him homeward."

"You see," remarked Julian, "we must be back in London in a week, to catch our Liverpool express boat! I will have the best assayers at work at our ores long before you return. To-morrow our money business can be arranged, and, then, I will bring you, face to face, with the best scientists. Our London reports will be all ready on our return."

Hawtrey felt ashamed of the manly confidence of the vaquero. "Fire away, pardner," he simply said. "What you do is O. K. You are on your own range! I leave all to you! When we strike the "Painted Mountains," it's my turn to take the head of the column!"

"Child in faith; man in heart," murmured the shamefaced promoter.

Monsieur le Capitaine Julian Hawtrey was the very pink of London Regent-Street perfection as he entered the modest office of Monsieur Achille Duprat. the next morning, precisely at ten.

There was nothing portentous in the notary's den save an exaggerated, shiny brass plate, on the door, and huge stacks of green cartons filled with the obsolete papers of clients, dead and gone.

A frown hovered over Hawtrey's usually unruffled face. For already he had the report that Sir Aubrey Hawtrey was not to be flushed in any of his "usual haunts."

In fact, the banker of the blasé young baronet would only admit that Sir Aubrey had "arrived in Paris" for a serious medical conference, a period of repose in a "clinique," and that his address was denied to all.

"I wish that he was in the permanent blessed repose of Père la Chaise," mused Julian, rising and greeting Raoul, now a boulevardier of the most exquisitely raffiné costume.

The gray-haired old notary, with a Hugo-like beard and mustache of snow, gazed politely through the lunettes at the different appearing brothers.

With lightning wit, Julian had noted the easy entrée from the notary's family rooms, and the ill-concealed friendly intimacy of the two!

"Liar!" bitterly thought Julian. "They are the oldest chums; it's easy enough to see that!"

But, the strident voice of the old man cut off these speculations. Flourishing a red silk bandanna, Monsieur Achille Duprat blew his nose like a cavalry ciarion.

"Messieurs!" he began, in the formal French address of the theater, the stage, the duel, wedding, funeral, and the law!

The shock-headed clerk, who was lazily engrossing documents with a yellow goose quill, listened, as a perfunctory witness, while Monsieur Duprat read certain actes de sommation, and then handed each heir a bundle of neatly made out papers.

Continuing his reading, Julian learned from the old man's verbiage that two hundred and forty thousand francs—or *comptant*—now awaited him at the Banque de France, upon due proof of legitimacy, and his legal identification.

"These funds are derived from a trust founded by Monseieur le General Reginald Hawtrey, in favor of his wife, née Aglaë Madeleine de Montbrun, and the lawful heirs of the marriage then existing."

Sly as a fox, Julian betrayed no emotion as he learned, for the first time, the name of the mother whose very memory was a blank.

"Good old name," he murmured, as he extended his personal papers of legitimation, passport, and personal description, all attested by the Chancellor of the French Embassy in London.

"*Parfaitement en règle*," bowed the old man, pushing back his gold-rimmed spectacles. "And I have the honor to present the *état de service*, *Polytechnique diplôme*, and *dossier de baptême et confirmation*, of Monsieur Raoul Hawtrey, duly attested by the First Secretary of the English Embassy."

With a careless nod, Julian turned to Raoul, "I naturally accept these proceedings as all in good faith, and shall only ask my banker to have his lawyer glance over them, as I intend soon to leave for America."

"Then, Messieurs," cried Achille Duprat, "if there are no further questions to ask, I will accompany you now to the Banque de France, where the Compteur-Rendu of the Trust, and your cheques will be handed to you, in my presence, on your both signing the final papers there!"

"Willingly!" smiled Raoul, "on one sole condition—that we return here and breakfast at the Faisan d'Or, one of the few still existing haunts of the old gourmets of Paris."

"Precisely!" agreed Julian, "provided that we share the expense, you and I, and give our friend, the Notary, *carte blanche*."

A voiture—sacred to weddings and great ceremonies—was soon at the door, and, on the way to the Rue de la Vrillière, the three lightly bandied the persiflage of the day, for Julian was a *boulevardier quand même*.

"Arcades ambo!" slyly decided Julian, for he quickly saw that his own complaisance had not de-

ceived the others. "They are both keenly watching me!" he reflected.

And then he gravely opened the matter of the assays. "I have a little professional affair to submit to you," he remarked to Raoul, "and it was for that reason that I sent the cases to Monsieur Duprat's office, which you saw before his door.

"I am thinking of some future business operations in mining which may take me to the southern spurs of the Rocky Mountains. But, the breakfast first, and then, you shall dine with me at Meurice's, for I must be on the Atlantic in a week!"

"*Volontiers!*" gayly cried Julian. "I am glad to find a client in my brother, and I have the leisure now, as I am now a general without an army, a 'soldier detached'; I am as free to go to Kamchatka as to Ceylon! I have nothing to tie me down."

"And, your headquarters?" listlessly asked Julian, secretly anxious.

"Oh! here with Monsieur Duprat," hastily said Raoul. "I am staying with an old college comrade, who lives near Charenton, with a widowed mother."

Julian bowed politely, and yet, he fancied that he had been given a false clew. The conjecture was correct, as all of the width of Paris lay between Charenton and the little hidden love-nest, down at leafy Suresnes.

The little comedy played itself out, with no break, and but one slight interruption occurred, after the two young men had received their comfortable cheques, and the old notary had, with much gravity of ceremony, guided them through a maze of signatures.

Julian's good humor was marked, as his windfall amounted to nearly nine thousand pounds, instead of eight.

"It is singular," he remarked, abruptly, as they left the Banque, "that there were no personal archives left by our mother?"

The carriage was on its way back to the Faisan d'Or, and, not even the swaying of the vehicle could account for the sudden color on Maître Duprat's cheeks.

"You ignore our peculiar French customs, Mon-

sieur," quickly said the Notary, while a blank look of astonishment settled upon Raoul's mobile face.

"I am a duly deputized notary of the Banque de France. The personal property of a decedent is sold to cover expenses, etc. I believe that Madame Hawtrey died in a religious seclusion in the south of France. And you were both absent; in fact, the Haute Police Directoire alone traced out your address, Monsieur Julian, through the English Ambassador. Any proper legal inquiry as to these matters may be addressed through your Ambassador."

Julian bowed formally, as Raoul, lifting his head, said suddenly, "I had hoped for family news from you, *mon frère*, for I am ignorant, in fact, of even the main events of the married life of our parents! And so you have nothing to tell me?"

"We will speak later!" gloomily replied Julian, as they drew up at the restaurant.

"See here," briskly said the young Englishman. "Let us leave Monsieur Duprat to order the repast! Walk over to the office with me!"

The notary's domicile was but a few yards away. Once there, Julian, with the help of the office-boy, quickly broken open the cases.

"Here," he said, with kindling eyes, "is something more practical than diving into the unhappy married life of our ill-assorted parents! I fancy it is only an unhappy mystery, one buried with them. Can you tell me what that ore is?"

Raoul pounced eagerly upon the opened ore cases, and then, for five minutes, Julian watched the excited scientist eagerly, his own foot resting on the unopened case containing the smelted copper matte.

"Where did you get this? Have you much of it?" cried Raoul, with sparkling eyes.

"That's another story!" coolly answered Julian. "What is it?"

"This is my special field!" joyously exclaimed the ardent young man. "I bought these ores in Spain and Germany, for a year, for a rich Hebrew syndicate! It all depends upon the amount which you can control of this!"

"What is it?" demanded Julian, delighted in his complete mastery of the situation.

"This is a magnificent series of samples of purple copper ore, sometimes called variegated copper ore, or Bornite," dogmatically replied the young engineer.

"The richest sample that I ever saw. I should say, by the weight, giving at least twenty-five per cent. of pure copper. Probably," he concluded, with emphasis, "there is silver in combination! The man who has a reachable mine of that, will be a modern Monte Cristo!"

"Let us go to our déjeuner," calmly rejoined Julian, as the now happy notary appeared. Maitre Duprat had pouched his check for fees upon the administration of the trust, and his face shone as that of an angel, for he had ordered a déjeuner commemorative, and his little round eyes winked in anticipation of certain bottles of yellow seal Chambertin, which were now being gently warmed by le Père Marbot, who had dined two generations of *viveurs*.

"Can you definitely assay the ores, and these metals, in two days?" said Julian, breaking open the box of roughly smelted copper alloy.

"Certainly!" cried Raoul, with kindling eyes.

"Keep a strict silence, then," enjoined Julian. "Do this; it may lead on to your fortune. I will be ready for you at the Hotel Meurice in two days, with a private dinner in my room! I will have a man there to meet you!"

"It shall be my only occupation," cried Raoul, "and I will take the materials home with me. Jules De Laude has his private laboratory at home, at Charenton!"

Once seated at the table of the Faisan d'Or, old Achille Duprat forgot all but the feast, and, while he busied himself with the *Dinde aux truffes*, the *huîtres d'Ostend*, and the *selle d'agneau*, gazing lovingly on the liquid rubies of the priceless Burgundy.

The brothers nimbly played with each other, as supple wrestlers try for a hold. It was greatly to Julian's satisfaction when the long-drawn-out feast ended.

The young men had gone over much of their world

wandering, in amity, and Julian felt a real pride in his veiled antagonist.

Anxious to place his cheque at once in a place of safety, Julian hailed a fiacre, and noted, with a secret admiration, the departure of his brother Raoul in a heavy carriage laden with the samples.

"I have to go all over Paris to get my little chemical necessities! These precious matters shall not leave my sight!" was Raoul's adieu.

"I'll never be able to track this alien-hearted brother," mused Julian, gazing back quizzically at the reddened face of Maître Duprat, now converted into a human wine vat.

"Old Duprat is as close as an oyster; he is loyal to this sly devil Raoul, and they are both at home here! Duprat evidently took a sudden alarm at my inquiries, and I shall never learn from them the history of 'La Mystérieuse.' Cui bono? Both my father and the woman whom he loved or hated are on the farther shore, now!

"If I find Raoul's assays confirmed, if his mining credentials are undoubted, I may tie him up, out there in the Painted Mountains, while I 'help along' Sir Aubrey on his voyage to the echoless shore. Devil take him! With a lucky money strike here, with the title, I might even see the old name raised into the peerage! And so, Monsieur Raoul, I'll speak you fair and softly, and let you fall into my trap."

One thing had fixed itself on Julian's mind as a *sine qua non*. "There must be no chumming between 'Texas Dave' and Raoul! I'll not leave the vaquero after they meet! I'll whip him over to London! Raoul shall join us at Liverpool, without an idea of where we go! And, so, I shall have the first chance at these possible millions. No one shall delve under me in this. It's the one chance to repair my fortunes."

A man of action, Julian Hawtrey had dispatched the remaining ore and sample metals, through his banker, for immediate assay by a leading firm of Paris metallurgical experts, long before his brother was safely ensconced in a technical laboratory, where he proposed to do his private work.

"Send the assays, sealed, to me, to London, at your

English agency, forthwith," said Julian to his banker, smiling, as he pocketed London sight exchange for eight thousand, nine hundred pounds.

"If you have anything to exploit, later, please consider our great facilities!" said the man of money.

"Thank you!" loftily answered the Copper King in embryo. "I can command ample English capital. But, bid them keep all the unused material here, as an evidence of the correctness of the assays. Let all be sealed up in your care."

Seated at ease, in his private room at the Meurice, that very evening, Julian watched "Texas Dave" cutting a clean swath through a French dinner.

The child of nature was duly impressed with the magnificence of Paris, and he audibly regretted that the South had, as yet, not been able to house General Robert E. Lee's sacred ashes as grandly as those of the penniless Corsican Lieutenant of Artillery, the mailed despot who shook every throne in Europe!

The English speculator, waked from dreams of future wealth, was suddenly struck by the queer destiny which had brought Sir Aubrey and the two heirs of his title to Paris, all busy in secret games of cross-purposes.

"Devil take Aubrey!" angrily ejaculated Julian. "He is as foxy a customer as my pseudo-brother!"

The secret reports of the head porter proved that no one could smoke out the aristocratic invalid.

"I think I've done the whole burg in good shape, thanks to you," remarked "Texas Dave," when the awe-inspiring steward had departed. "I'm ready for business now!"

"So am I," quietly rejoined Julian. "To-morrow we will go down to the American Consulate-General, execute our partnership, and I'll give you your money. The assays will be done in two days, and so we will leave on the night boat, day after to-morrow."

"All right, Cunnel," rejoined Dave. "You must get a London frontier outfit, too, for our trip will be a rough one, and we ought to hustle back to see Don Andr s, and get to our mine before the stormy season sets in. Unless you know something about mining, you ought to take a practical man out with you."

A new idea flashed over Julian's crafty mind. He would use the Texan to spy upon his brother, and the brother to watch his simple-minded partner.

"I think that I can get a good man, here," said Julian, veiling his schemes behind his unruffled countenance.

"That's right!" heartily said Ross, "and you can take his expenses out of the first profits of the mine. There is no man in New Mexico, who is up to these mining deals. He will need an outfit, too! We must make a secret and a flying trip! I don't want to raise any local excitement there—until we have corralled all the wood and water for five miles around our mine. I can get a few of our men to take the land up and transfer it to us, and my deputy-surveyor will keep all the locations secret."

It was midnight before the two strangely assorted partners had ceased their castle building, not in Spain, but in the far wind-swept reaches of the Hermosa Range.

"Simple, sincere, straightforward, with a wonderful fund of 'horse sense'—this product of the Texas prairies should be easy to handle," thought Julian, as he threw himself down to sleep; "but, *Monsieur mon frère, c'est bien autre chose!* And you, Monsieur Raoul, I shall handle with gloves, both of velvet and steel."

Wise in his own conceit, the crafty Julian was being secretly outwitted, for, over a merry supper at the Hotel de l'Aigle, Raoul was now mentally laying snares for the man who had divided Aglaë de Montbrun's legacy.

At his side, Laure Duvernay queened it over the dainty supper commemorative of the golden windfall. The saucy beauty was already busied in her schemes to draw a trickling stream of golden revenue from the watchful Abbas Pasha and the enamored Veronville.

The beauty pouted at Raoul's preoccupation. "I must be an exile for two days," he whispered, pledging her bright eyes in the goblet she had kissed. "There is a strange destiny which sweeps me nearer to this strange brother Julian, every day! I may go over to England with him!"

"And I?" anxiously cried Laure.

"You can play at hide and seek with the spies of your fatuous Pasha and that fool Veronville," said her lover. "You must carry out your social deception as to Doctor Richepin. A graceful invalid, a sufferer from heart disease!"

Laure laid a soft hand on her lover's lips. "*Tais-toi!*" she cried. "Tell me, is there a great milord in your strange family?"

"To-day, at Richepin's, making my arrangements for consultation, there comes a fade young Anglais, who at once tries to flirt with me! Richepin bows before him; he is domicile with the great doctor.

"And I have the little wretch's card, too! Richepin's *dame d'attente* slyly gave it to me, with a few banal words, when he left the consulting-room. I was *très chic*, you will agree!"

Laure laughed as she drew the card from her bosom. Raoul eagerly seized it, reading the engraved words.

"This is the very devil's luck!" he cried. "Only this great grenadier, Julian, stands between me and this title now. Sir Aubrey Hawtrey, of Combermere, Wessexshire, has five hundred thousand francs a year in clear land!"

"*Voilà mon pigeon!*" gayly cried the freelance of fortune.

"And, he has not a year to live!" sighed Laure.

"What say you?" demanded Raoul, seizing her wrists in his excitement.

"The *dame d'attente* told me," quickly answered the frightened woman. "*Il est 'vieux marcheur,'* and broken down with what you call, the 'high life'!"

Raoul Hawtrey's face darkened! The burning pages of Aglaë de Montbrun's diary returned to his excited mind. "*Nom de Dieu!*" he cried. "You must captivate that man! The prettiest toilette of Worth shall reward you!"

"Explain!" eagerly cried the sinuous Laure.

"Wait for a few days," hastily cried her lover. "Then, I will tell you all, but, cleave to him; let him go on and fool himself—*comme bien des autres!* He shall be a leading card in our game of fortune! But,

on your life, never a word of me to him, or of my stranger brother! We are hereditary enemies, and you shall aid me, perhaps, to pay off the debt of an outraged Frenchwoman! Duprat has slyly obtained the whole family history! While I am busied in these assays, watch *la maison Richepin*, and, let him follow on!"

The stars swept on over sleeping Paris, and yet the lovers tarried over the silver foaming wine, linked in the passionate abandon of the passing hour so strangely sweet. For to them, had not yet come the dull reflex tide of satiety, and their mad love was waxing to its zenith!

That night, before he slept, Raoul Hawtrey swore again his secret oath of vengeance. "Let him beware—this son of his father! He draws me on to the goal that I seek! They shall pay for the past, to the very last item of that record of misery!"

It was a singular coterie which sat around Julian Hawtrey's hospitable table at the Hotel Meurice, two days later.

A cloud of cigarette smoke hid the too expressive face of the man who had been introduced to "Texas Dave" as Monsieur Raoul Montbrun.

With a merry laugh, Raoul compromised with the plainsman, who, after some trouble, had memorized the phrase "Mounseer Ray owl de Mount Brown!"

"Now, my dear boy, just call me 'Brown,' for short, if I go to Texas with you! It will save trouble," cried the Frenchman, speaking in fluent English.

Raoul recognized the artful craft of his elder brother, who had not left him alone for a moment with the vaquero.

"You see, we must disguise our relationship," Julian had artfully dictated. "This is too large a proposition for me to handle alone. If your assays conform to others, if you think there is really a mine, I will make you a proposition to take a run over with us! We must be off for London to-night, to catch the Liverpool steamer next Saturday. You can send me to-morrow all your measures, and Mr. Ross will have your prairie outfit got up with ours! All that you have to do is to catch the 'Lucania' at Liverpool,

next Saturday! I'll have your ticket, if you telegraph me to the United Service Club."

"Then, you will not need me in London, at present," said Raoul, in this preliminary half an hour before the dinner.

"No; by no means!" said Julian, hastily. "There is no 'brotherhood' in business! If I organize a company in London, later, I may play you off as 'an experienced French scientist' on our promoters! You may be a drawing card, under your mother's name!"

"Our mother's name!" quietly remarked Raoul.

"Pardon!" gravely rejoined Julian. "And you can see how valuable you will be, out there, in being able to watch Ross, these plainsmen, and the 'whole outfit,' as they say! If you were known as my kinsman, of course they would all flatter and hoodwink you!"

"You seem to be an agnostic as to human nature, Julian!" sneered Raoul.

"I have found most men to be liars and thieves—only varying in the modern veneer which hides our underlying barbarism!"

The simple-minded "Texas Dave" had also been coached by his crafty partner, and he only referred to the location of the mines as "the mountains!"

A running fire of deft cross-examination led, in a silky tone by the Polytechnique élève, drew out, during the dinner, a complete physical description of the lode from the frank Texan.

"Square to my company; true to my pardner!" was Dave's motto, and he now carried a draft for over twenty hundred pounds sterling in his pocket, the exact London equivalent for ten thousand dollars.

And so, the papers being all duly signed at the American Consulate-General, Julian Hawtrey was entitled to the very fullest disclosures.

After the dilettante brothers had finished the café noir and the crème de Moka, there was nothing left for Dave to disclose.

He marveled at the deftness with which Raoul drew out all the minutest features of the lonely nook in the "Painted Mountains," where the unreaped millions lay hidden under the spell of silence and primeval loneliness.

At a privately arranged signal, Julian finally called for the production of Raoul's personal assays. "You can read out the percentages and French values," said the elder brother, "and I will work them out, so that Mr. Ross will understand all."

"I have rendered them all in the metric scales, and also in your own systems and values," said the young engineer. "Here they are, in duplicate," he said; "sealed and certified by me."

With a hand trembling with eagerness, Julian studied the inclosure, and watched "Texas Dave" apparently puzzling over his copy.

In five minutes, Julian triumphantly cried, "It is marvelous! Here is the mean of three London assays, and a series of working outside Parisian assays. The general consensus is, 'A fine variety of bornite and chalcopryite, averaging twenty-three and nine-tenths per cent. of pure copper, with five dollars and sixty cents in gold,'" he almost shouted, "and nine and a half ounces of silver per ton!"

"I feel complimented," gayly answered Raoul, as his nimble fingers were busied with the pencil. "I make it twenty-three per cent. copper, five dollars and eighty in gold, and nine and three-eighths ounces of silver! The ores run remarkably even!"

The brothers stared in a mute astonishment as "Texas Dave" threw an envelope on the table. "You are mighty near what the five tons actually worked, in the Newark smelters, in New Jersey," said he, "and there's the metallurgist's cheque pinned to his return. I didn't have time to wait, and so, they sent it after me!"

Julian caught his breath first. "How did you do this?" he exclaimed, with an increased respect for Dave's scientific abilities.

"Oh, dead easy!" answered the cowboy. "My surveyor's mule-train packed the stuff in to Antonito for me, a hundred miles from Coyote. I went up there, barreled it, marked it, 'from El Paso del Norte, Mexico,' and then, sent it on ahead of me to New York! That's no humbug, for no man knew where it came from!"

"You are a genius," warmly cried Raoul.

"Well!" modestly answered "Texas Dave," "I knew if you did not take hold, that I must have something to show old Don Andrès Armijo's bankers in London! But, they would just go in and 'freeze' me out! I'm glad I'm in with a square gentleman, a man who would not take advantage of me!

"And so you can bring Mr. Mount Brown along; all he'll really have to do is to see that the stuff is there, and plan the laying out of the works! We must grab all the water and timber, as I said, and begin to make roads and use the farthest timber for our charcoal! Then the roads will get better all the while, and we can haul both ways! They are going to run the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad in this year, and also locate a big army post to watch the Jicarilla Apaches!"

It was fortunate that "Texas Dave" expressed a wish to take a run down to the "Big Store," *i. e.*, the "Palais Royal," to catch up a few pretties for the gal at home, under the guidance of the head porter.

"Fetch him back at eleven!" was Julian's stern injunction. "We can not have Mademoiselles Fifi and Fleurette walk off with our Copper King! We must take the midnight train!"

When the brothers were left alone, Raoul laughed softly. "Your simple-looking Texan is no fool, *mon frère*," he remarked.

"Do you see the wisdom of concealing our relationship?" eagerly cried Julian. "Now, I have no time to throw away! What think you of the venture?"

"It is a princely heritage," decidedly answered Raoul, "*if it is there!* That is all! To certify to its existence is my future task! And, now, what do you offer me?"

Julian flushed slightly. "Let us see! I'll be fair and frank! Five hundred pounds honorarium, all your expenses, and a tenth of my half—if you go in as our scientific superintendent!"

"There's my hand on it! I will be with you to the death!" cried Raoul, strangely starting back as he realized that it was the "*auri sacra fames*" which had brought their palms together for the first time.

"Of course," good-humoredly said Julian, "I pro-

vide all your outfit, clothes, weapons, personal supplies and all."

"There's but one thing, Julian," firmly demanded the younger brother. "I must now have the post-office address, to have my passport and mail sent on."

Julian penciled an address on his card, "New Mexico Cattle Company, Coyote, Rio Arriba County, New Mexico."

"Though our station is only a few huts and drinking hovels, there is the telegraph, with cable facilities, and a daily mail from Barranca, on the railroad. I'll give your cheque now, if you care!"

"Thanks!" loftily said Raoul. "We can settle later! Now, you must be off. Go ahead and take my letter! I'll meet you next Saturday at Liverpool, on the 'Lucania,' telegraphing my departure from here, and go right on to Liverpool, ignoring London."

"You'll not fail me?" hazarded Julian. "Paris is full of soft, white bosoms, beating in generous sympathy with a handsome fellow with eight thousand pounds! I would have no scientist if you failed me! I trust none of the American pretenders—'jackknife prospectors'!"

"Bah!" laughed Raoul, catching up his hat and "pardessus": "*J'ai déjà passé mes beaux jours.* I'll be with you to the death; the Frou-frous can wait till I am worth plucking!"

Serene in his own conceit, Julian Hawtrey complacently eyed Soames, with nimble fingers, deftly stripping his dressing-room. "Have the carriage in readiness at half after eleven, Soames!" ordered the budding millionaire.

"Go ahead with the luggage and get a good compartment! Let my carriage wait! I will 'lasso my wild pardner' and, be on time!"

Ten minutes later, Hawtrey had paid his bill, a masterpiece of Gallic elasticity, and received his frontier charge in good shape from the porter. He had suddenly learned that David Ross would bear considerable mental scrutiny, and, as to his versatile and accomplished brother—there was an unknown quantity.

"Capable fellow, a bit sly; oily, like the old Greek

wrestlers. I must find out his weak points!" mused the cold-hearted promoter! "But, here's a golden harvest ahead! This cash will hold off my creditors for six months; the copper mine, if it shows up, will pay all off, and then, give me the stepping-stone to rank and wealth!"

When the bold Texan strode out of the Hotel Meurice, people glared at the strange intimacy of the London *élégant* with the modern Daniel Boone! But "Texas Dave's" heart was light, as he sighed in relief, "Thank God! I'm on my way back to Coyote! I'm not dead stuck on Paris; and, as for London, it's too foggy and wet a camp for me! I'm glad to be back on the hurricane deck of a broncho!"

"And, the young lady?" quizzically asked Hawtrey, as the carriage rolled away.

"I will get married the moment the mine proves to be a sure thing, and, then, start my big sheep ranch!" conscientiously added the plainsman, feeling in his pocket for the photograph of a red-cheeked young lady in a gingham frock and a string of golden Mexican beads, who, he proudly announced, was "the only woman in Rio Arriba County who could play the 'Shower of Pearls,' without notes, on the piano!"

"You have a treasure there!" enviously remarked Julian Hawtrey, as he bit off his *Cabaña*, "a rare treasure!"

The cynical, sneering speculator would have been uneasy if he had seen a beautiful face peering out of a closed carriage which had driven into the courtyard of the Hotel Meurice.

"Fix them both in your mind, Laure," whispered Raoul, in hiding behind her. When we follow them to the station, you can mingle with the crowd and closely observe them! See them both go! And, then, we will have a little supper at Maxime's."

An hour later, Raoul and Laure Duvernay were laughing over their champagne and *ecrivisses* on the dais at Maxime's, and gayly watching the reckless dancers beginning their artfully managed midnight saltatorial exercises.

"What a magnificent *corbeille* of Parma violets," remarked Raoul, gazing at Laure's bouquet.

"Pray, sir, observe this exquisitely jeweled bouquetière!" proudly cried Laure. "I have not been idle. My fellow-sufferer," she laughed, "sent it to me to-day by the *dame d'attente* at Richepin's. It seems we *both* have heart disease!" she demurely cried!

"And, what said you in reply to Sir Aubrey Hawtrey?"

"That I would dine here, alone, at seven to-morrow."

"He said?" demanded Raoul.

"That he would be my *voisin*!" nodded Laure.

"Then, my future is in your hands," whispered Raoul. "You must never let that man domicile himself in London till I return! Smother him with all your fascinations! It is our fortune!"

CHAPTER IV.

A LITTLE ROW AT MAXIME'S—CROSS-PURPOSES.

Some subtle spirit of unrest tormented Raoul Hawtrey during the night in which his crafty elder brother was hastening back to the now anxious London stockholders of the crippled Cattle Company. He had been carried off his feet by the prospects of sudden wealth in the marvelously rich copper mine lying far over the sea.

And so, without a word, he had joined his fortunes to those of the calm, phlegmatic elder brother whom he now hated with all the fierceness of his Gallic blood!

With soldierly promptitude, he proposed to devote himself, however, to arranging his simple affairs for a three months' absence; and yet, it was necessary to change his strategy after the campaign was on!

Reckless and pleasure-loving, he had drifted along in the Orient, easily superior to all those around him—save in craft and duplicity—ignorant of his family history, and with no ties to chain him to France.

He had joined his fortunes with the passionate Laure Duvernay by the sympathy of their uncontroll-

able natures—by the similarity of their dependence upon the great of the earth.

The beautiful decoy whom Abbas Pasha had used to secretly fathom all the designs of the French Ambassador had been useful to Raoul to spy upon the same haughty Turk who was Raoul's own wellspring of fortune.

And, sheer necessity had, so far, kept them loyal to each other! A single word from Raoul could betray Laure to Veronville, now a mighty power in Constantinople, in view of the budding Russo-Frankish alliance.

And, the influence of Laure, whom the old Pasha both loved and feared, could have cast him out, as a broken adventurer, by merely maligning him to Abbas. The mysterious adventuress was, however, sure of her safety, for the courtly Veronville, to use her as a spy upon the Austrian Embassy, had given her papers, official protection, and his social countenance; and so, the grim old Abbas Pasha dared not touch a hair of that graceful head!

Too well he knew that no "mysterious disappearance" would suffice to explain the fresh young Hebe's absence to her faded diplomatic adorer, Veronville.

And, Laure herself, while slyly making her nest warm, either with French gold or Turkish guineas, had grown into a fierce delight in dominating Raoul Hawtrey, the most charming young cavalier of her shadowy circle!

For, the secrets which all had failed to surprise, locked up in her bosom, too sternly proved to her that no possible stroke of fortune could bring to her a lucky marriage, and consequent solidity of position.

For, the suave, young, princely Orientals of Abbas Pasha's train all knew of her double life of villainy; the sleek, insolent, adolescent attachés of the French and Austrian Legations saw the penumbra which shadowed the brightness of her shining star!

Constantinople! City of the rose, myrtle, and cypress! The Countess Laure Duvernay was a "persona grata" there, in the half light of the Sick Man's tottering throne; but, even in the summer intimacy of Buyukderè, where the diplomatic families gathered, the

haughty women of the accredited circle would coldly ignore the suspiciously beautiful and lonely Laure!

Her title was, like the Palais-Royal jewelry, however tasteful and appropriate, after all, *not real*!

It was as to his future relations with Laure that Raoul now fought with the two ruling passions which dominated him—ambition and revenge!

He had learned to be coldly secretive in his Russian wanderings, and in dangerous Asia Minor; and, beyond telling Laure of his divided legacy, he had hidden carefully from her all the astounding discoveries of his return to Paris.

As Julian had rightfully suspected, the keen old Achille Duprat was Raoul's private champion, and the young engineer had told none of his secrets to his brother, and only half of them to Laure—a fascinating companion, but, a dangerous confidante.

In this sunny morning at Suresnes, after Raoul had arranged his rôle for the enmeshing of Sir Aubrey Hawtrey, the young man pondered on the whole situation all the way into Paris.

"Five hundred pounds—my fee—with her own gains from Abbas's and Veronville's secret service, will keep her 'en reine' in my absence. Let her go on and mystify this dawdling invalid! She can easily hasten the inevitable for him. But, I must think it all over! First, to put all my family papers in the steel vaults of the Credit Lyonnais!"

He might have trusted them to the devoted old Notary, "But," mused Raoul, "he is old—a bon vivant! He may die, he might soon follow on! They are safest there!"

And he had resolved upon a useful rôle for old Duprat—that of secretly watching Laure in his absence! "She may have designs of her own! It was a woman who brought the bitterness into the Hawtrey line!"

And, then, he reflected that Sir Aubrey Hawtrey, a refined voluptuary, would not be gudgeon enough to take Laure for an *ingenue*. "Not after a tête-à-tête dinner at Maxime's!" he growled.

A disturbing fever now burned in his veins! There was a Pandora's box left to him in the secret papers of his dead mother! It was the journal of "La Myste-

rieuse," the history of her later life; the hidden secret of a landed estate in Ardèche, a legacy of her own, a comfortable, snug fortune, which was to pass alone into the hands of him who was the only thing ever loved by the dead Aglaë! And his mother's married life called for a cold revenge!

It had seemed all so easy to drift into this passionate partnership with the fascinating adventuress! And now, he stood at the parting of Life's ways! The secrets of his mother's long-guarded papers would enable him to assume a titular name and a rank of the greater nobility with the old Languedoc fief.

And yet, he could hardly secretly enjoy this revenue and be free! He dared not marry the woman whom he now feared!

Her antecedents in France would be soon searched out by the bitter Abbas, or the revengeful Veronville! And now, but one hated life stood between him and the dying Aubrey Hawtrey! It was a golden bait, this old English name—the broad acres—the vast rent-roll!

"There lies my revenge!" he growled, "to rob Julian of all this golden harvest! And, if he, this *petit milord*, dies while Julian is away out there, no one would know the reason if he died obscurely over here! She must never know of my hopes, my plans!"

When Raoul reached the Place de la Concorde, his brain was darkened with dreams of a deed without a name!

His brain throbbed, the hot blood beat upon his temples!

He murmured, with parched lips: "Dare I trust myself! No one out there will know me as his brother! But, I must hide all from Laure! She would be my tyrant for life!"

The young French engineer hastened to arrange his few private affairs for the expedition to that vague place only known to him as "the mountains"!

Some familiar devil in his heart whispered that there was a future danger to him in the now enforced intimacy with the sinful Eve of his Ottoman paradise.

The woman had been really necessary to him there in Constantinople.

At once a spy and tool of Abbas Pasha, guiding his reckless operations with Continental financiers, Raoul (while in Asia Minor) could have been easily "rubbed out" in case of the cold-hearted Turk's sudden resentment!

But Abbas too well knew that Laure, hot-hearted and a law unto herself, would make a great clamor at the French Embassy if Raoul, her romantic lover, "disappeared."

And, as for his banking and engineering standing, *le Capitaine* Raoul Hawtrey was duly entered at the French Embassy, and possessed inviolable passports and papers. He was a dangerous victim to handle.

But, Laure's protection was no longer needed! Raoul knew well that he would never return to the Orient! "We do these things as well, only differently, here in Paris," smilingly reflected Raoul. "A man is silently wrecked and then cast out, a human husk, to rot in obscurity! They kill themselves here quick enough, without violence! Baccarat, absinthe, the women, *le Sport*, *la Bourse*, the High Life extravagance—all these things are a 'continuous performance.'"

When he had "cashed in" his cheque on the Banque de France, he opened an account at the Credit Lyonnais, and took out a letter of credit on the New York agency for the full amount.

"I have always the Château Verneuil property to fall back on," he mused, for the vineyards at San Fèlicien, in Ardèche, would always give him an assured living—the old fief bearing the courtly title of "Marquis de Verneuil" in a special grant royal of the great Louis XIV.

"It might be useful for me sometime to dodge all these people," decided Raoul, as he quickly dispatched a well-chosen déjeuner at the Café Maxime, prudently retaining a double table on the dais for dinner, and a single one in the corner.

He sacrificed a louis to obtain the double table.

"Monsieur can see that I am telling him the truth," said the grave steward. "I have put off this English gentleman for you; his servant waits even now to retain a double table!"

Raoul started as he noted the visiting-card of Sir Aubrey Hawtrey.

"Just let him have it," hastily said Raoul. "One single table for two, in the corner, will do for me, and a side table in that row for the lady. She will present this card"—and he hastily scrawled "de Villemont" on a wine label!

For Laure's coign of vantage, he had selected a neat half-table, partly screened by an overhanging portière!

"This fellow has evidently caught on," he mused, "but he's a sly fish—a veritable old Boulevardier, *qui connaît bien son Paris!*"

In the cab, on his way to Duprat's to remove the papers, he decided to mystify the old Notary.

"Achille drinks, and either Sir Aubrey or my dear brother might try to bribe him! And who, nowadays, will refuse the good yellow gold!"

Old Achille stared in surprise when Raoul rattled off his story. "I am going over to Pennsylvania to report on the latest American steel processes for a great syndicate here. Register my address 'Care of the French Consul-General in New York City.' I may travel there for three to six months."

And so, when he had recouped all the archives of the departed Aglaë de Montbrun, Raoul verified the careful registration of his official New York address, as given by the Credit Lyonnais.

"Your brother, *ce gros Anglais?*" cunningly demanded old Duprat, who hankered after another feast of Lucullus.

"Gone off yachting to Norway, thence to Iceland, and, *après, Dieu sait où,*" laughed Raoul. "He and I will never make old bones together! He is of the father, and I of the mother!"

Old Duprat was stunned by Raoul's executive energy. "*Mais c'est drôle! Cette relation!*" growled Achille.

When the fateful diary and the last scraps of family papers were trebly locked in the great vaults of the Credit Lyonnais, Raoul merrily leaped on a steamboat to take his breathing spell on the river down to Suresnes.

"I am now invincible," he mused, as he smoked his Syrian cigarette on the gliding steamer's deck.

"Julian knows nothing of the past—and he never shall! The Credit Lyonnais is a safe defense. Nothing can be traced there from the Banque de France! My funds are all now available in New York. The Credit Lyonnais will dispatch my passport to New York City to their agency, in my true name, and the legal status of Raoul Hawtrey. 'Monsieur de Mount Brown' will do for Texas and New Mexico. They bring my outfit from London. Old Achilles knows not whither I go! I must tell Laure the same story—the witch will perhaps look him up. I can write her from New York that Julian has gone away to the cattle country, and that I have taken a 'scientific quest,' which I concealed here!"

Before the swift steamer had left Sèvres behind, Raoul decided to leave Sir Aubrey in Laure's hands, without "special orders."

"She will pillage him—gold, jewels, dress—all the 'spolia opima' of womanhood will fall her way! *Al-lons! Laissons faire!* She will send him to the devil quick enough!"

When the steamer swung up to the great stone bridge at Suresnes, Raoul Hawtrey had worked up a sullen ferocity against his cool-mannered brother Julian.

"He it was who proposed me to go out, as an unknown! He would use me as a mere cat's-paw in this game for millions! Who knows what designs may lurk in his mind? Has he fallen heir to his cold-hearted father's diary—the man who broke my proud mother's heart? Ah! I will be the first in this game of wits! He shall pay all the debts of the past!"

Raoul was astonished at the radiance of Madame la Comtesse Laure Duvernay on his arrival! A fierce pride of life glowed in her provokingly insolent beauty! She was already prepared for her departure to Paris.

"All must happen, '*par hazard*,'" cried Laure, throwing her arms around Raoul's neck.

"*Tenez!* We must understand each other! This great Milord is no 'ten-pound tourist'! Your presence might frighten him off!"

And then, the sagacious Raoul explained his selection of the tables, giving to his fair companion the duplicate card for the Maitre de Hôtel.

"I will not be far off, and I will be, for to-night, Monsieur Paul de Villemont, a friend of your late husband, a litterateur and a traveler, about to leave France."

While they leisurely drove into Paris, Raoul described all the glories of Combermere, Sir Aubrey's vast possessions, and his unfailing wealth.

"Your game of cross-purposes with Abbas Pasha and the Marquis de Veronville will, of course, detain you here," craftily planned Raoul. "Keep this rich *milord* dangling after you here in Paris! Do not trust yourself in England with him! You would be soon forced into the shadow of the *declassée*! Here, on your own ground, you can strip him at leisure! But, if you would win my love forever, help him along à *grand vitesse* to Père la Chaise!"

There was an ominous silence until Laure, her voice husky with some strange emotion, whispered: "Raoul! If this man should die, the title would go to your strange brother, and then he also gets the property?"

"Yes! Yes!" hastily answered Raoul, with averted face.

"Grand Dieu! What a stake to play for! You are the younger—you would be the only heir! And, *ce gros bête de* Julian rambles over the world—there is shipwreck—a thousand other chances! If you were a *milord Anglais*, would you make me your wife?"

Raoul trembled in the sudden unveiling of his darkest plans—his wildest hopes!

Alone with a passionate, loving woman, shuddering at the yet unformed thoughts of his own mind, haunted with his dreams of a vengeance, and burdened with his dead mother's secrets, Raoul bowed his head, and gasped "Yes!"

"Swear it to me!" muttered Laure, her brown eyes now darkly sinister.

"I swear!" gasped Raoul, for he saw that fortune crowning Julian, would insure the success of the mining venture.

"He would be rich, with a vast credit, and I can make my share of the mine equal to his own yet!"

For, strong in the pride of his brain and the highest technical skill, Raoul Hawtrey knew that he would soon drift into the controlling place of the fabulously rich mine.

"'Sir' Julian," he mused, "would seek London's pleasures—the gay world—High Life—and I, in the parched deserts, would be drudging rolling up his wealth! We shall see!"

"Raoul!" cried Laure, as she threw her head down on his bosom, in the shaded alleys of the Bois de Boulogne, "I will sacrifice even my love for you! But I shall go on with you—to the end! There is this vast fortune, this title, this palace in the green English vales! When they are all yours, I shall be at your side! Never betray me, never abandon me, for we have gone on too far together—we are one to the death now!"

They had reached the Place de la Concorde before Raoul awoke from his astonishment at the reckless woman's intensity of feeling.

Perhaps the fiery philter of the Orient sun had quickened the fierce passions of her wayward heart!

"She must know nothing more!" vowed the startled lover. "It is a tigress awakened now!"

And, coward like, he rejoiced that the wreck of Sir Aubrey's wasted life would be the woman's work alone!

"I will keep away from him!" he mused.

The artful Venus Victrix halted the carriage in a side street!

"Here we separate!" she whispered. "I go to my hairdresser's for *les pattes d'arraignée*, the finishing touches! We must not be seen together! I will dismiss this carriage! You can arrive on foot! I will take another, in a half an hour, and then—descend, *chez Maxime*."

"Remember," whispered Raoul, "you must hold him in Paris! Here you are all powerful!"

"Trust me for that," laughed Laure. "There is no danger! Marthe, the *dame d'attente*, tells me that the remedies which Richepin gives him are so dangerous

that only here they may be administered, *en présence du médecin!* Not even his valet of twenty years is to be trusted for that!"

"And, what address will you give him?" suddenly demanded the man who now felt himself fast drifting into hands stronger than his own.

"The Hôtel de l'Aigle at Suresnes!" calmly said Laure, her face flushing crimson. "You go away to-morrow night, and—le Baron Aubrey will, I think, find some little villa for his further stay! If I lied, he might trace me! Once that we separate, you are no longer a source of danger!"

"And, my letters?" demanded Raoul, with some anxiety. "Of course, you write only to the Consulate-General at New York!"

Laure handed him a card. "There is the only safe place and name in Paris! It is invulnerable! Marthe Lebœuf is my old nurse."

And though he craftily sought out the little shoemaker's shop in the Rue Neuve des Petits Champs before he left Paris, the elegant Raoul never dreamed that the broken, middle-aged woman was the "honest sister" of the twain! That, la Comtesse Laure Duvernay had begun life as one of two abandoned, nameless waifs—a barefooted flower girl in the dark, narrow alley of the 'Bouilleabaisse' legend! She was a flower of the gutters of Paris!

There was light and the glitter of silver, the odors of good wine and the gleam of bad diamonds in Maxime's well-oiled ménage, as Laure Duvernay swept through the front hall, an hour later, gliding swiftly up to the dais of the haute volée.

"*Tout ce qu'il ya du chic!*" murmured a half dozen leaden-eyed convives as the Maître de Hôtel, silver chain on neck, received "Madame" with a low bow.

The gleam of a half louis and the slipping of the card into Auguste's hand brought a bow precisely *half as low as a full louis*. For, Auguste regulated his courtesy in a scale of the most rigid austerity!

And then, in a few moments, the self-possessed Raoul, with an air of decision, quietly following, took his place at the diagonal table.

The obsequious garçon had barely finished the not-

ing of Madame's repast "*très soigné*" when, with ill-restrained anger, the lover noted two clubmen, insolently confident of their rank as "*habituez*," deliberately seat themselves in dangerous proximity to the beauty, whose superb bouquet of violettes de Parme was fastened in the exquisitely jeweled trifle which had been Sir Aubrey's first timid offering!

The influx of these *gommeux* caused the engineer to ignore the quiet entrance of Sir Aubrey, whose valet had discreetly retired after piloting the aristocrat to Madame Laure's table.

In half an hour, the famous resort was crowded with the bright-witted vultures of clubland—the keen, heartless arbiters of fashion and pleasure! A few women, faultless in attire, even if shaky in morals, were sprinkled throughout the room, the ensemble being as dangerous an entourage as even the fearless adventuress dared face unmoved! Raoul absently ordered his dinner, with furtive glances watching the slender physique and pallid countenance of the head of his house.

The wineglass trembled in Sir Aubrey's wasted fingers as he pledged the beautiful woman who was the center of an ill-concealed "public Examen."

But the two, so strangely drifting toward each other, were all absorbed in their low murmurs, and only the audacious clubmen followed on the tête-à-tête in which Sir Aubrey had lost himself.

Suddenly, low titters of laughter aroused Raoul, whose face darkened, as one of the wine-emboldened insulters deliberately executed a well-devised imitation of the invalid Englishman's manner, using a two-franc piece as a "monocle." It was the culmination of a vulgar persecution!

There was a mirror which gave the unruffled Sir Aubrey a view of this performance, at which the frightened Laure had suddenly paled and gazed around in sheer helplessness!

The Polytechnique élève started up as Sir Aubrey deliberately arose and calmly tossed his glass of wine into the face of the leering youth!

There was a rush—a wild clamor—but, lithe as a panther, Raoul had leaped between the two men! His

arm shot out like a flash, and the young bully came down, "as cattle drop," across the broken chairs!

"It is infamous!" cried Raoul, in a ringing voice. "Monsieur is an invalid—a helpless man! It was *lâche!*"

To the companion who had sprang forward, after Raoul's nervous arm had hurled him off, Sir Aubrey extended a card. "You can send your friends to me, at the British Embassy," he icily remarked, "if, you claim to be of the rank of gentlemen!"

"Allow me!" said Raoul, as the Baronet offered his arm to the half-fainting woman. "Let me see you to your carriage!"

"My footman will remain and settle the bill," said Sir Aubrey, at the door, when the Manager, profuse in apology, rushed entreatingly to the entrance.

"*And I, will remain and settle with you!*" fiercely cried Paul to the still menacing uninjured clubman.

At the door of the carriage Raoul hastily bade adieu to his unsuspecting kinsman. "It is nothing, Monsieur!" he said, secretly pressing Laure's trembling hand! "This is a matter of the police, not of honor!"

And, only upon the explanation that "Paul de Villemont" was leaving Paris next day, could Raoul dispatch the gallant dupe with his lovely siren!

"That binds them together *pour toujours!* He will never leave her now!" growled Raoul, as he turned back into the café.

"If you fancy to take a lesson in swordsmanship," coolly said Raoul, lighting a cigarette, "follow me!"

He faced the excited champion of the man whose crushed features were being "put under repair," now in a waiting-room.

Raoul bitterly added, "There's a good excuse!" as he delivered a ringing slap in the bully's face.

"I'm with you!" remarked a sturdy cavalry captain from Saumur, as Raoul stood by until Sir Aubrey's valet had paid for the waiter's interrupted menu. "I remember your face at the Polytechnique!"

"I need a little practice," quietly remarked Raoul, as le Capitaine Georges d'Albert, Neuvieme Regiment de Cavalerie Legère, very callously arranged all the

particulars with a sullen mob of the habitués. It was a fight on the instant!

When the long procession of carriages, which reached the nearest salles d'armes in the Avenue Jèna in hot haste, slowly dispersed, after an hour, the bluff Captain d'Albert remarked to the surgeon, hastening out for medicines, "Please tell that gentleman, when you have dressed his shoulder, that his friend can also be accommodated by be at this same address! My principal leaves town to-night!"

Raoul Hawtrey only escaped from his fellow-officer after a jolly wine party at the Café Riche!

"*Diantre!* But you are a strong sword!" laughed d'Albert, you've not forgotten your Polytechnique practice! You pinned him to the wall through that shoulder, in fine shape!"

"I fancy that he will not insult any more sick strangers, for a semestre!" moodily replied Raoul, who at last sought the shelter of Suresnes to escape from the noisy congratulations of several of the chivalric guests who had insisted on taking his side in the double quarrel! It had been a superbly devised accidental riveting of Sir Aubrey's chains!

Alone, and now anxious for his departure, Raoul having sent all his luggage on to the Gare St. Lazare, telegraphed his departure to the United Service Club! It was late in the afternoon when Laure Duvernay silently entered! She threw her arms around him in a frenzy of delight!

"All Paris knows of your bravery; and, you risked your life for me!"

"Let us talk only of our parting, Laure," sadly said the man, into whose soul the demon of unrest had now entered! He asked no proof of her guilty victory! For, on her snowy finger shone the matchless ruby ring which had gleamed before his eyes when Sir Aubrey faced his cowardly foe!

"It is our last meeting here!" sobbed the adventuress. "There is a villa in the Parc de Fontainebleau, ready to hide me now; and, you must forget me until we meet again!" she sobbed, faithful to her chosen lover, even in the dark ways of crime!

That night, Raoul Hawtrey watched the wild sea-

bird careering over the blackening waters of the Channel! He was rushing blindly on to a destiny formed for him by the dark spirits who minister to the blackest passions of the human heart!

He had left behind him two erring human souls wedded in their sin by the fortuitous happening of the Café Maxime, and before him, in his path, lingered, awaiting him, the crafty kinsman, for whose brief advancement Laure Duvernay had vowed the destruction of her cynical dupe, the head of the unhappy generation of the Hawtreys.

Raoul Hawtreys's mind was far away from the gay banks of the Seine, its loves, its dinners, its duels, and all the glitter of the Gallic Vanity Fair, when he was trundled across foggy London to St. Pancras Station.

He had dropped his patronymic, and he smiled grimly as he sent his first telegram announcing his coming, signed "Raoul Montbrun."

"I am Mr. Mount-Brown now," he mused, "to the end of this first American chapter of my life, and I can safely leave Laure to amuse herself with despoiling Sir Aubrey Hawtreys! My game lies before me, and before I am done, Julian shall feel French wit, a gleaming rapier, pitted against English brawn, a mere clodpole's club!"

On past York, the wily plotter hastened, smiling at the way in which he had outwitted Laure. The woman who had simply toyed with Abbas Pasha and the acute Veronville, had been easily fooled by her adroit lover! He had not responded to her feline curiosity as to the imperiled future of the saturnine Julian. When Laure murmured "Go with him! Gain his confidence! We must have that property, and the title!" the future way was not clear!

But now, safe in his assumed name, Raoul felt all his advantages of position. "Let her go on and clear this human wreck, Sir Aubrey, out of my path! Then, there is but one obstacle, and who knows what fate may not come to him, the next heir, in those lonely Painted Mountains! Laure must never know! There is but one to watch—one lynx-eyed meddler—this fellow 'Texas Dave,' a compound of seer and fool, of rustic and genius, an honest, brave, and square adven-

turer! Laure will not dare to tell her story, for, I can fancy, the little drama in the villa in the Parc de Fontainebleau, will hardly bear the light. And, she *then* will be in *my* power! Basta! If she takes wing, with her spoils, it will be back to the open arms of Abbas and Veronville!

"No! I am her master now! Never will I be her slave! She must not be able to follow on my path! Silence is strength here!"

While the giant "Lucania" strained at her moorings in the muddy Mersey, Julian Hawtrey, sitting at ease in the Northwestern Hotel at Liverpool, gloated over that first telegram of his intended dupe! Julian felt safe now! Here was "Texas Dave" safe under his own eyes, and now, cut off from all possible temptation by Don Andr  s Armijos's unknown banker friends.

The Texan was in high glee, for the last final ratification of the New Mexico Cattle Company's reorganization had made all his future plans sure of a peaceful fruition.

"If the company had a busted up," thought Dave, "the fellows out there would have lynched me, dead sure.

"And then Hannah Maverick would ha' lost a good husband, an' my sheep ranch scheme would have been laid off fer good! This yere copper scheme is sure to make the Cunnel pay off all them wild cattle fellers!"

Julian, prospectively promoted to a "Colonelcy of the frontier," little dreamed of the game of cross-purposes now being silently dealt out by the cards of Fate!

For reasons of his own, the sly promoter had left Soames behind him. It suited his own secret plans, and was backed up by Dave Ross's vigorous advice.

"You don't need no valet out thar," sententiously said Dave. "Jes' roll out of the blankets, shake yourself, an' comb yer hair with yer fingers. That's the frontier! Besides, we must fly light, and only pack in our grub, a few tools, blankets, and ammunition! We don't want no feller to chatter and bring a whole lot of rustlers on to us, to jump our claims!

Only you and I, and your man, Mr. Mount-Brown, shall see the mine till we've got her dead square to rights! We are pardners, you and I; and, surely, Mount-Brown won't talk!"

"He won't talk, *when I've finished with him!*" mused Julian, strolling to the window, with its dreary outlook of a procession of umbrellas, drizzling rain, and drenched cabs.

"He will bring all his private papers with him; he will have the key of this life mystery of 'La Mysterieuse' somewhere about him. When he has verified the mine, laid out the proper working process, and I have squeezed him like an orange, he may be 'lost on the prairie.'

"But I must hoodwink 'Texas Dave'! This fellow is no fool. I can easily get him out of the way! Once alone with me, in the Painted Mountains, Raoul shall yield up the secret which wrecked our family!" So it seems there were two human wolves in the strangely assorted family of the dead English officer.

There was no time for useless delay when Raoul leaped out of the dripping cab at the hotel door. Julian was already in waiting, surrounded by a crowd of flunkies, voracious of the last unearned shilling.

"Jump in, old man!" cheerily cried Julian. "Our luggage and outfit is all on board! We've no time to lose! The tug waits for the last mails and passengers!"

On the way to the docks, Raoul only had time to learn the cheering news that the London assays and workings had more than confirmed the Paris experiments.

Through a crowd of drunken sailors, wharf loungers, cabbies, and helmeted Bobbies, the three voyagers reached the tug, and, in half an hour, the great "Lucania," with much fiddling and responding to the pull of a half dozen teasing tugs, grandly moved out of the muddy ditch seaward! The mysterious quest had begun!

"Monsieur Mont Brun" pocketed his ticket and then calmly proceeded to satisfy his fast, while "Texas Dave" in wonder examined all the impedimenta filling the three staterooms.

That night, in their constitutional on deck, Dave unboomed himself on the subject of the outfit, for Julian had courteously said to his brother, "Your traps are all in your room! I've tried to fit you out well, and if there is anything further needed, you will have my *carte blanche* at New York! And Dave, at Coyote, will of course provide the tents, animals, and the camping supplies."

"Shall we stay long in New York City?" demanded the alert Frenchman.

"Only two or three days! Dave and I wish to see the works at Newark, where the ore was worked, and have a talk about the right process for working! Of course we expect you to join us in that. You will want a day or so for yourself in New York?"

"One day will suffice! I should like to drive around the modern Babylon," cautiously said Raoul, mindful of his consular visit.

"Well, let us make a rule!" gravely said Julian. "These ocean steamers are crowded with the sharpest men and women of the world! Our mining business is not to be mentioned till we are safe on the prairie at Coyote, save during that visit to the Newark works."

"That's dead right!" exclaimed Dave.

"Everyone tried to 'rope me' on the way over!"

"And you!" laughed Raoul to Julian. "How will you put in your time?"

"Whist, the smoking-room, and B. and S.," was Julian's answer. "You, of course, will follow up the ladies?"

"*Pourquoi non?* That is their sole use!" remarked Raoul. "To amuse the man, and *pour passer le temps!* I shall explore the sex, always 'an undiscovered country!'"

And so, as the great ship plunged on over the green rollers, the two brothers—bitter enemies at heart—went their prudently different ways, the soul of each filled with a thirst of gold, with dreams of place and power, while honest Dave Ross, with painfully imperative digs of the pen, poured out his heart, on paper, to the red-cheeked Hannah Maverick, the belle of Rio Arriba County, now awaiting him at Caliente.

"She'll know that I've got the whole business situation, in a nutshell!" grinned the happy bridegroom-to-be.

And so, as the days sped on, Julian easily got up to his old form at whist, Monsieur de Montbrun made deep incursions into the hearts of the fairest voyagers, and no one suspected the secret compact of the three strangely assorted adventurers hastening over to grasp the unprotected treasures lying far across the sandy mèsas in the lonely peaks of the great divide separating the watersheds of the Atlantic and Pacific.

Carefully watchful not to excite Julian's jealousy by any confidential chats with the Texan, Raoul merely went over with the frontiersman in his cabin all the details of his personal outfit.

Vastly amused was Julian when he dropped into the cabin and found Raoul examining a remarkably powerful-looking revolver, which, with its cartridge belt, hung at the head of his berth.

"That's something that I pride myself on!" remarked the elder brother. "When I went to Africa, I had these two revolvers made especially for me by Webley. They carry the regular heavy army cartridge, caliber .60, the heaviest ball fired from a hand arm; that is, outside of tiger and elephant rifles! I have one for myself, and I give you this one! For we will be together, and so, our ammunition will be interchangeable!"

"It's a magnificent weapon!" critically said Dave. "I've my old Colt's .45, but this would stop a grizzly bear! You are right! Out with us, a man needs a hand weapon heavy enough to kill any moving thing at a short range! This ball would go plum through a buffalo."

"Yes! and the slugs are steel tipped and pointed!" proudly cried Julian, returning with a sample cartridge. "I have five hundred rounds of this special ammunition."

Noting the frontiersman's admiration of the beautiful weapon, fashioned out of hand-worked steel drop-forgings, the "Colonel" good-humoredly said, "Dave, you take us to our journey's end and show us

what we seek, and then, I'll give you my own revolver!"

"You must keep yours," the promoter said, turning to Raoul, "and, by and by, Webley can duplicate it for me! I have his written guaranty never to make another!"

"All right!" carelessly answered Raoul, as he strolled away, hearing the voice of his *chère amie* Mademoiselle Cruche-cassée, of the great army of French Devourers of Humanity, an extremely light-headed, light-hearted, and light-heeled prima donna, ringing out down in the cabin.

"That French chap wouldn't kill a fly!" audibly mused "Texas Dave," as the two moved away.

"You are mistaken," calmly answered Julian. "He's brave enough, and he has been in the army also!"

Three days later, after a desperate engagement with the New York customs officials, the party left the docks, where Mademoiselle Cruche-cassée, an enraged tigress, was objurgating "*ces bêtes d'Américains*," and the party modestly put up at the Astor House.

"You can take your 'day off' to-morrow," said Julian to his brother. "I will arrange all the railway affairs, and Dave can go over and warn the Newark people of our coming visit! Then, day after to-morrow, you will go with us! Remember you are just to be a Frenchman and a 'greenhorn'—a man who understands no word of English, a mere layman, but you'll keep your eyes open!"

"Never fear!" gayly answer Raoul, as he departed to make his evening toilet, and skip off to the nearest theater, while the happy Dave rushed away to telegraph to Miss Hannah Maverick, Caliente, Rio Arriba County, New Mexico, and to mail his bundle of letters.

When the party settled down in the cars, two days later, for a long sweep to New Orleans, Trinidad, and Santa Fé, Julian congratulated Raoul. "You played your part well over at the Newark works," he remarked.

For, the acute engineer had gathered every detail of the American processes with marvelous acumen.

"I'm a fair actor," the Frenchman smilingly said.

"There's only one man in the world to handle these ores! It is Ambroise Larue, of Sheffield and Swansea. He has a process that will double our net returns! And, on our return, he must be interested! He is a sly old Belgian, and owns the patent! He must be 'taken in,' and hoodwinked, for he drives a hard bargain!"

"And you shall be, my friend!" mused Julian, as he strolled away, to enter the name instantly on his shirt cuff.

"I think Laure in England, and myself in America, can handle that mine!" decided Raoul, as he carelessly rolled up a cigarette *en Turc*, and laughed as he thought of his visits to the French Consul in New York and certain dark projects which he dared not breathe! "I will hoodwink them all!" he laughed. "And, Laure is already at work!"

CHAPTER V.

IN THE PAINTED MOUNTAINS—"THIS SHALL BE MINE!"

Three weeks later, the "French Count," as he was termed, strolled leisurely up and down the crowded streets of the little town of Caliente, in New Mexico. He had become vastly tired of his comparative inaction, while Julian Hawtrey, as the Specially Empowered Manager of the New Mexico Cattle Company, was busied with all the readjustment of that moribund company's affairs.

There had been long conferences with Don Andrés Armijo, a number of public meetings of the claim-holders, and frequent sittings of the lawyers and officials.

But, Caliente, a shakily frontier settlement, clustered around its one-track railway, offered little to interest the refined engineer.

Taos County was a duplicate of Rio Arriba, and the Frenchman had ample leisure to review the astounding panorama of his hurried voyage.

The Middle States, the pine-clad South, the broad Texan plains—all these were new, but barren vistas to the man who had feasted his eyes so long upon the gorgeous color pageants of the Orient.

The medley of adobes, rough sheds, barrooms, "stores," shops, and cottages which made up Caliente, were mean and pauperlike scenes, as he thought of the cloud-capped towers and gorgeous pinnacles of Constantinople.

In the muddy, unpaved streets, low-browed Indians, wandering negroes, swarthy Mexicans, and uncouth frontiersmen were thronged in a motley mass. The visible women were either faded drudges, or part-colored creoles, while in the pretentious "Albuquerque Hotel" and the gaudy "saloons," gamblers, "drummers," tourists, rude frontier cattlemen, swarthy desperadoes, and wandering, cheap actors made up a forbidding mélange.

This was a "pent-up Utica" for the crafty French plotter, who watched his scheming brother with an unerring patience, and lost no movement of "Texas Dave," now, a local man of mark!

Raoul well knew that before they could move out for the Painted Mountains, the affairs of the unhappy company must be all "straightened out," to use Dave's vernacular.

The quest was to be a secret one, and he recognized Julian's sagacity in their proposed departure by wagon, to Coyote. The real "flying start" was to be made from there, with a pack train and camp outfit, under the escort of a score of riders, presumably "to look up sheep ranges." It was a well-hidden expedition.

No one had as yet penetrated the secret connection between the three men, and Julian Hawtry had easily renewed all the acquaintances of his previous visit. This time of waiting was not lost, for Raoul was left free to arrange his own mental devices.

While absolutely devoid of employment, the keen Frenchman secretly studied the entourage of the prin-

cipal actors in the coming drama which was destined to make Julian Hawtrey, a Copper King. There had not been a single word lispd upon the dangerous quest!

Julian had never even once referred to Ambroise Larue, the great Belgian-born metallurgist, whose chimneys flamed day and night at Sheffield, whose furnace-stacks lit up the acid-gnawed lands around Swansea.

By day, Raoul had carefully examined the heterogeneous community until he found a stranded French jeweler, François Duval, who was also the optician and general scientist of the little town.

Satisfied of this man's reliability, Raoul furtively telegraphed to the Consul-General of France in New York City to forward his mail under cover to the lonely Gaul, who was delighted to revive his mother-tongue.

The appellation "Mont Brun" had been localized, and the engineer was known as Monsieur Brown, or, vaguely, as "the Count."

While Julian sported his unmistakably English "togs," and "Texas Dave" was again a typical "cow-boy," the studied elegance of Raoul's garb had darkly confirmed the theory of his aristocratic lineage.

For, he disdained to don the frontier habiliments, until they had rendezvoused at Coyote, the company's head-ranch house, for the trip to the mountains.

Affecting an entire ignorance of the English language, in deference to the artful Julian's wish, Raoul was a walking mystery to Miss Hannah Maverick, whose neat, white cottage home, with green blinds and a real piano, occupied the same relative place in Caliente, as the Parthenon in proud Athens.

The honest Texan girl, bashful before the distinguished-looking "Count," sang her few simple songs in a frightened tremolo, and missed several of the most important "runs" in that Paderewskian attempt, "The Shower of Pearls!"

But, one sinister adventure caused Raoul Hawtrey to realize that he must "dress down" to the rude people, and drop the Parisian cut in his garments.

The effeminacy of his delicate face, the sleek symmetry of his form, the comparative "Tyrian purple" of his garb, induced a brawny, drink-maddened bar-room reveler to rudely assault the "Count," in the benevolent idea of making "a little fun for the boys."

Julian and the honest Dave happened to be in the next room, when the "Count," leaping back, executed a singular movement of "*le savate*," which stretched the burly brawler senseless on the floor!

A half-dozen pistols were already drawn when "Texas Dave," his eyes ablaze, leaped into the angry circle.

In his hand was a cocked revolver, with several ominous notches on the stock, a grim record of the cowboy's prowess.

"*The man who insults this man dies!*" grimly cried Dave. "He is a gentleman and a stranger. Let him alone—the whole gang!"

And, when the now angered Raoul was led triumphantly from the room, the bystanders remarked: "That there French Count is a daisy! He just stepped back, folded his arms, bowed politely—an' kicked Big Jim's head half off!"

With some acerbity, "Raoul Mont Brun" appeared next day, clad in plain traveling russet; but girt with the cartridge-filled belt and the huge revolver presented by his crafty brother.

The curious loungers marked the quiet determination of the young Frenchman, and over their "toddy," decided that he was "a good proposition to let alone."

Arizona Sam remarked judiciously: "That there Count's got a revolver as big as a young cannon, and, by Gosh, he just waltzes around as if he was dying to use it! Besides, 'Texas Dave's' a dead shot, and strictly a man of his word! The chap what kills 'Frenchy' has got to kill Dave or pull 'up stakes' and clear the country." A period of profound peace at once intervened!

The night before their departure for Coyote—by providential luck—Raoul received all his letters from New York City.

A smile of sinister content settled upon his face as he read a few lines from Laure Duvernay.

The letter was unsigned, but the sinister triumph of the woman who had sworn him to share her life was evident. When Raoul saw the last fragment of the letter disappear in smoke and ashes, he muttered:

“And so, she now has him in her power! He has begged her to visit Combermere, and Doctor Richepin thinks that Sir Aubrey will not live *trois* months!”

The dark adventurer instantly telegraphed through his Gallic ally to the Consul-General to withhold all future letters.

“She must not have a line from me to show—not a single line!” he mused. “She, tiger-hearted, will do her work for the plunder, but, Julian must not be in Europe when it happens!”

On the next morning in a road-wagon, escorted by a half dozen well-armed men, the three secret explorers drove down the long, straggling street of Caliente. While “Texas Dave” waved his adieu to the buxom Hannah Maverick, standing with a huge sun-bonnet on her shapely head on the porch of the Squire’s home, Raoul’s heart leaped up within him. So far he had not been recognized, in any way, as Julian’s brother. He had found a most useful confederate in old François, the watchmaker. And with the artful idea of a “double cross,” he had sent a few loving words to New York, dated “*en voyage*,” to be mailed at the Consulate to the secret address of Laure Duvernay.

“I am safe now! Free to play at any game!” delightedly mused Raoul. “For, she will be forced to cover her tracks—if Sir Aubrey Hawtrey should suddenly die on her hands!”

Julian was in great form on this crisp September morning, as they rolled along over the stony prairie. The heavy goods were already at Coyote, the escort and pack-train were all in readiness, and he had closed the important cattle and sheep compact with Don Andrés Armijo. The cabled news of the ratified agreement was already delighting the Executive Committee in London, and a doubled committee of three men, named by each party, were already proceeding

to arrange for herding up the cattle and counting up the sheep—transferring them over, in lots of a thousand accepted cattle and ten thousand accepted sheep, on each side.

“Texas Dave’s” glee was undisguised, for he saw in the rapidly effected negotiations the near approach of his simple nuptials, the one ambition of his honest heart.

The departing travelers had left a knot of “quidnuncs” behind them, who held ambulatory sittings in the various saloons of Caliente. The local astonishment that “the Count” had escaped “Big Jim’s” avenging pistol was considerable. It was true that Big Jim had been adjudged to have shown the “white feather!” But, a generally accepted solution of the mystery of “Mr. Mount Brown,” “Count Brown,” or “the Count,” was found in the general belief that he was a secret agent of the “people in Europe,” who were putting up the “big money” to square up the Cattle Company’s affairs.

“Boys, let him live! He is ‘persona grata’!” said Squire Maverick, the father of the bouncing Miss Hannah. The Justice of the Peace came down to his audience by saying: “Anyone who will get those French and English suckers to invest good money out here, *ought to live!*”

And, this dictum of the only man in town authorized to wear a silk hat and a crooked-necked cane, by a dignity which legally clothed him, went on record as the sum of human wisdom.

“The titles to this property are all right!” meaningly remarked Julian, in French, to Raoul, as they dashed along. “I have examined the deeds, surveys, locations, and all the certificates and government papers. It only remains for you to find that the body of ore exists, and of the grade sampled by our friend.”

And so, as they watched the bobbing prairie dogs, the scattering ground squirrels, and marked the lean, gray prairie wolves stealing along after the scattered sheep, the two brothers easily chatted in the French tongue, thus made invincible to their neighbor’s curiosity.

Each of the wary Hawtreys felt that they distrust-

ed each other, for, as they sped along, no memories of a common parentage, no recalling of a childish, friendly nurture, drew them together.

Sleeping by night, at the wayside road-houses, toiling along by day, over the coyote-infested plains, the two wary, secret antagonists were no whit the wiser as to each others secrets, when they drew up on the sixth day at the great adobe stronghold of the bankrupt Cattle Company. Located in a vast, green valley, a rich oasis in the sandy m \acute{e} sas, the Home Ranch, with its huge corrals, its outlying settlement of Mexicans and straggling Indians, was a dreary and forbidding abode. A half-drunken German clerk, with a lustrous-eyed, slatternly frontier woman waif, welcomed them to the lonely spot where the unfortunate Major Gibson had been bucked off and broke his neck. And yet, the woman had been a beauty once! Her story shone out in her furtive, velvety eyes, the story of a human downfall.

Scattered around the paseo, were the men, mules, and burros, gathered up for the mountain trip. As they dismounted, Julian rapidly cautioned the Count:

"Remember! No confidences! No careless remarks here! This broken-down German clerk may speak French and the woman looks like a foreigner. Once out in the mountains, alone together, you and I can share our secrets, for then, we will have only Dave to watch us!"

The listener nodded his grave assent.

Struck by a sudden emotion, Raoul Hawtrey wandered out through the crowd of swarthy vaqueros to catch a glimpse of the Hermosa Range. There, towering up in the thin, green sky, were the blue, pine-crested ridges which hid the coveted fortune. So thin, so clear the air, it seemed that a day's march would easily reach their bases, but the great Divide grandly swept northward to the fastnesses of the Jicarilla Apaches and far away south to the desert around Fort Wingate.

"Once out there in the mountains, alone together," softly repeated Raoul, as he recalled his brother's words. His teeth chattered with a sudden chill, as he saw Julian stealthily regarding him.

"Does he already suspect?" the plotter thought, as the blood rushed to his heart, and then, he entered the house and, with a forced gayety, joined in Julian's jubilant potations.

While "Texas Dave," now the sole director of the voyage, busied himself with preparing the train and escort, Raoul carefully looked over the secret packing of the assay and sampling outfit for the masked voyage of verification. Julian's tour of inspection of the cattle herds necessitated a day's delay, in which time the light-minded Raoul had achieved an insidious intimacy with the once good-looking woman, who had fled westwardly with the now drink-sodden Johann Eschenbach. On the night before their departure for the mountains, Raoul stole out alone to gaze upon that lofty range, sculptured in the hazy blue, with the silver stars hanging high over its graceful peaks.

"There is the lottery of life and death out there! There is fortune beyond the miser's dreams! And of us two, which shall be the victor?"

The weaving spider watched the faraway summits whence the Puerco on the east, flows to the Gulf of Mexico on the Atlantic; and, the San Juan, on the west, to the Gulf of California on the Pacific, and he murmured:

"It is a royal stake to play for—this mine of the Painted Mountains! The crown of fortune which hovers over his head! He has made the way smooth for me! He has denied me, even in name, for his profit! And I swear, in time, *this shall all be mine!*"

Julian, bluff and burly, sitting with "Texas Dave," now actively ordering their departure, watched askance, while Raoul returned to the poor woman dupe whom he was idly flattering.

"Fool!" thought Julian. "If I knew all about Mr. Ambroise Larue and his patent, I would soon lose you in these mountains! But, I can afford well to wait. You shall serve your purpose. I will use you—fool you to the top of your bent, and then, two of us shall go to the Painted Mountains and but one return! For the secret of that French mother's life—the unfaithful wife—who cost my father a title, shall be mine

if I wrench it from your heart! Once out there in the Painted Mountains, when the hour of fate strikes, we will soon settle accounts!"

And, each intending to be "his brother's keeper," two Cains drank together that night, in that strange brotherhood wherein no Abel had been born. Here were two nineteenth century Cains, divided from the mother's womb by a hereditary lust for gold, title, rank, and place, on the one side; and on the other, by a greed for flattery, the applause of crowds, the fickle favor of a beauty-loving public, and all the vain, restless imaginings of a woman's unstable heart! Aglaë Madeleine de Montbrun's mysterious dower of beauty had been to her but a crown of sorrows, and the Pandora's box of the sealed legacy of her life's secrets was fraught with evil destiny to her dissimilar and secretly warring offspring.

But, neither of the stalwart Hawtreys philosophized as "Texas Dave's" resolute voice sounded the reveille for the journey to the Painted Mountains. Even the oldest vaquero realized that Raoul Hawtreys was as graceful and lithe as a young Pawnee chief, when he turned out, at last, in his mountain rig. He had even indulged in a few hours pistol practice with Dave Ross's pet revolver. A crowd of old marksmen watched "the Count's" astonishing performance. They were amazed when Dave, taking off his hat, said earnestly:

"Mr. Mount Brown, it was a godsend for 'Big Jim' he didn't get into a shooting-scrap with you! You are a boss dead shot! Why don't ye try the young cannon?"

Raoul smiled as he handed back the pistol.

"We need all that ammunition. It can never be replaced. But, Dave, you shall have twelve shots!" And then, the stockmen grinned as Dave drove in the spots on a six of spades every time with the great Webley. "That's a pistol to fight for a man's life with!" he said, as he blew the smoke out of the muzzle.

"Well, Ross," whispered "the Count," keeping up his affectation of not speaking English, as he drew Dave aside, "find that mine and I'll give you my

pistol when I leave the country. We will be over here one month, and back in three, if we find what we are after. I will lay out the works, and then, the mine will run itself!"

While Julian, the pattern of an "English explorer," went off to the corrals with Dave and Eschenbach to verify the pack train, and start it on, Raoul drew Lischen Eschenbach aside for a few words of adieu in his soft Parisian. The fugitive wife had been fairly well educated abroad, and, she was able to frankly use his natal tongue

"When I come back I will make your life a little lighter," murmured Raoul, "and, I will do anything you wish in Europe, for I will return in three months."

The poor waif had furtively decorated herself to please this last admirer.

"There is some good looks left in her yet, with care and prosperity," mused Raoul.

"I will be your slave," she whispered, with flashing eyes. "I will die for you—if—if—you will bring me news of the child that I left in Mülhausen! Hush! They come!"

As the three men rode away, "Texas Dave" looked back to see Lischen Eschenbach waving an adieu! But, he was busied with admiring Raoul's magnificent handling of the wild mount which he had picked out! "The Cunnel's a good, all-around man, but this here Mount Brown is a Jim dandy! He kin ride like a Comanche an' shoot like a Texan ranger! If he's dead game—an' he showed it with 'Big Jim'—I'd sooner tie to him on the perara than the big fellow! Cunnel Hawtrey's just a bit too much of a man!"

Relieved from the watchful presence of their escort, traveling a half mile ahead, the three horsemen freely indulged in a conference in the English language.

"Now, Ross!" sharply said Julian Hawtrey, "you are the boss of the trip! I leave all to you! I wish to think all my cattle matters over! You can ride with Mr. Mont Brun, and post him, now, on everything about the country and the mine. I'll do my talking with you at our halts and in camp! Once there you must not speak to Mont Brun. Let me do that! Remember, *he is always the Frenchman!*"

And Julian galloped ahead, taking command of their advance guard, fixing his eyes on the lofty termination of their three days' march!

They left behind Eschenbach, dreaming of promotion and unlimited libations, through secretly aiding Julian in all the Cattle Company's affairs, and the guilty Lischen, dreaming of an escape from a hell on earth through the agency of the handsome Frenchman.

"How can we get on in camp, up there in the hills, you and I?" said Raoul, now anxious to cement an intimacy with "Texas Dave."

"I've studied that all out," simply said Dave. "I have three Mexicans in our ten men, who speak not a word but Spanish! I'll keep them in our camp! The seven white men I will put in two little camps on the ridge to the north and south, and let them guard the summits! Thus they won't know what we're up to!"

"That's famous!" simply answered Raoul. "I speak Spanish well! I was two years in Spain buying ores!"

"And, the Cunnel don't know a single word! By Heavens, you're a wonder!" said "Texas Dave." "So, that's all square and easy now!"

As they plodded along the fretting animals fell into the easy frontier jog, the wild herds fled away from them, and, on distant knolls and mounds, the black-tailed sentinel deer marked their approach. Across the dry mèsas, the fleet, yellow antelope flickered, and the sneaking coyotes passed the word on to their skulking mates. Far on ahead, they could mark the white cover of the one light spring wagon of their flying column, and even when Raoul and Dave halted for a luncheon from their saddlebags, Julian was moving on a league away to reach an early halting place for the night.

The acute-minded engineer had busied himself on the sea voyage and railway with the study of maps and French livrés de voyage. He had wandered, unmarked, around Caliente, secretly picking up the gossip of prospector and plainsman; his conferences with old François Duval had yielded a rich harvest.

And now he addressed himself to pumping the earnest-minded Dave Ross.

"Not a note will I take," secretly resolved Raoul. "I will, of course, have to make a map and sketches, but that great oaf of a brother of mine shall know nothing but what I choose to tell him. Cunning schemer as he is, he is a mere lump of handsomely shaped flesh, a polite Guardsman, fit only to destroy the Queen's beef and beer! And when I get hold of Ambroise Larue, if this mine turns out all right, I will have a good slice of this fortune or else, an enormous retaining fee! Julian will not dare to throw me over till his own fortune is safe—if he does then."

Raoul was busied for three hundred yards in mastering his wild horse, for he had plunged the rowels into the wild steed in his involuntary excitement. In the long day Ross poured out his stores of accurate observation to the keen cross-examiner. The scout found Raoul strangely familiar with the formation of the great tableland, five thousand feet above the sea, with its deep, fertile canyons, its castellated peaks, its beautiful natural parks, and its network of streams. The fauna and flora, the geology, the general trend of the land, seemed to be pictured in the Frenchman's busy brain.

"I can't tell ye much more," dejectedly said Dave. "Ye seem to know all I do, an' a blasted sight more. I can just show you the place and then turn you loose to work out our fortune!"

It was so; even the distribution of pine, spruce, and cedar, oak, ash, maple, and walnut, the value of the yucca and amole, and the canaigre, were all known to the engineer. He described the lignite and the coal, the iron ore and fire clay, the porphyry columns, the hot springs and salt lakes, and told of the old Spanish mines and their history.

"The Injuns would think you was a god!" admirably cried Dave, when Raoul pictured the elk, antelope, deer, mountain sheep, bear, and cougar. He knew the wolf and lynx, the coyote and ocelot, and laughingly sketched the wild turkeys, geese, ducks, and prairie hens, even the strange sage hen of this hunter's paradise!

"The truth is, Dave," laughed Raoul, "the old Spaniards were pretty good explorers, and you Yankees are, after all, only vulgar intruders! You frontier yahoos know nothing but herding cattle, and this land is really virgin, for the old priests and officials kept close mouths! Here is a land as yet idle, fit to support millions, fit for wheat, corn, oats, barley, fruits, and grapes. Every vegetable grows here, the gama grass and alfalfa clover are unequaled, and, with an intelligent irrigation, sixty million acres of land could be made equal to Egypt's gardens here!

"The old Aztecs and Toltecs were once happy here; the rude northern Indians, mounted on the vast herds of horses, bred from the Spanish stray animals, swept away that intelligent race. To-day, the American squatter and Mexican mongrels merely infest this superb domain. Yes, I have traveled here! In my studies, in far-off French and Spanish libraries, for the man of education can rove over the world—at home! Books are the eyes and minds of other men!"

The first camp was a cheerful one, and Raoul, watchfully silent, listened to Dave Ross's strange stories of the old Spanish legends, of Kearney's conquest, of the Southern raiders, and of border fray and Indian massacre, until Julian, delighted and wearied, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, "spliced the main brace," and laid down complacently to sleep.

Beside him, Raoul darkly dreamed of the wily woman far away in Paris, of the unfound treasure, and of the name and title of the unhappy Hawtreys. And the matin barking of the coyotes roused them at dawn, to reach the foot of the great Divide on the night of the third day!

"Here," said Raoul, as he wandered away from the camp fire with Julian, "is the connecting link between the rich Rockies and the treasure-bearing Sierra Madre of Mexico. Four or five broken ranges, two hundred miles below, are the real connection, but, this great Divide, the camel's hump, between the Atlantic and Pacific, must be filled with unfailing veins of gold, silver, and lead. There is copper, zinc, manganese, quicksilver, and other rare metals, with store of fine marble, mica, cement, gypsum, and

fire clay! There is an unopened treasure house! Geology never lies! Mineralogy is only the localized search for the valuable metallurgical harvests!"

"Well," gruffly said Julian, "to-morrow night, we will know whether Ross has lied or not!"

And then, the schemer and the scientist lay down to dream side by side!

At sunset the next day, six exhausted men halted in a little valley formed by the sinking of two wooded spurs, four thousand feet above the level of the great mèsas at Coyote!

Ross, silent and watchful, had detached the wagon and four men to the north, by an easy ascent, to take station at a summit prairie four miles off, indicated, and light the signal fires. The three other whites were sent south to an observation peak a league away, with similar instructions, both having directions to await Ross's orders sent by one of the Mexicans, and only to close in on the permanent camp at the Painted Rocks, in case of an attack from wandering Jicarillas.

Gifted with an artist eye, Raoul had paused at the last summit knoll looking east to gaze back upon the yellow mèsas, stretched out far below, with its green valleys, its deep, wooded canyons, leading far away to the silver thread of the Puerco.

To the north and south, nature's castellated fortifications showed more skill than Vauban and Cormontaigne, while the fringing mantle of sighing pines stretched northward fifty miles away, to where the Jicarilla Apaches gathered the piñon nuts, and chased the fat deer in the sycamore and cottonwood forests.

Delighted with the eastern vista, Raoul, a new Balboa, in his exalted mind, climbing a rock on the west end of the valley, could look down and see the setting sun gilding the great western valley of the San Juan, sweeping away through Apacheland, to the mighty Colorado of the West!

"It is glorious!" cried the excited Frenchman, while the prosaic Julian, after picking out a spot for his tent, and spurring the Mexicans on to unload the

six pack animals and picket out the horses, demanded sharply of Ross:

"Now, sir, where's your copper mine?"

"Texas Dave" coolly unpacked his coffee-pots and frying-pans.

"We're within a mile an' a half of it! My two men have a little cabin down on the ridge, to the west, in a little canyon, a half mile away! I'll steal out after supper and call 'em in! I sent a boy, Hannah's brother, roundabout out here, to let 'em know we were coming, an' not to go a-shootin' of our men! It's all right! The mine won't run away till the morning!"

Some strange excitement seemed to possess Julian Hawtrey, after the shelter-tents were spread and a hearty meal had been deftly provided by the Mexicans.

"Texas Dave" had slipped away on his secret mission and Raoul, calmly expectant, sat watching the silver moon sailing high in heaven and flooding the minarets of these lonely Sierras with argent light! The waters dashed merrily on in the canyon below, the mountain-owl boomed, and suddenly Julian demanded:

"What are all these glittering fires?"

He pointed to a dozen lights flashing on the northern summits, twenty leagues away.

After a few words with the Mexican sentinel, Raoul answered:

"It's the Jicarilla Apaches on the warpath. They go down and harry the Utes, the Navajos, and the Arizona Apaches, now and then."

"We will need protection here!" gravely said the Englishman. "What do you think of this dangerous location?"

With professional calmness, Raoul answered:

"I have sketched and angled out an excellent road up here. This water-power is evidently abundant; the ores can be moved down hill by their own gravity. There is but one question: Is there a mine here? And, in a few days, you shall have my professional opinion!"

The brothers lay rolled up in their blankets by the camp fire when the unwearied "Texas Dave" strode back into the camp.

"It's all right!" he joyously cried. "My men have been busied as I told them! They have sunk twenty little shafts, scattered along a mile and a half on the lead, and you can see the depth and breakaway of the exposed vein along the bluffs! They will be in at daybreak! I've given the Mexicans their orders to watch the whole camp! The boy will follow us with some grub from the cabin to-morrow, and then I'll take you over the whole land! Then, 'Mr. Mount Brown,' you can use the two men and the boy for any secret prospecting you want, while the Cunnel and I look out for the camp; and he can be commander while I, will be general scout, and see our two outlying parties daily. Thar's been no one here, and, you see, the mine is all right!" chuckled Dave, as he laid down, his head resting on his saddle. "The horses is all right!" he said.

"Do sheep range up here?" suddenly said Julian. "I saw many well-worn trails as we rode up!"

"Them's Injun paths!" simply said "Texas Dave." "These here Jicarillas go gallivanting down the ridge, get into the San Mateo, and sneak over to the Osairo, and often raid down into Chihuahua!"

"Should we sleep on our arms?" anxiously asked Julian.

"It might be just as well," said the philosophical Dave, "but, the Government's grubbing them, an' they don't kill many white men now. It don't pay 'em! Just as well, however, to keep a bright lookout!"

And from that very moment, both the brothers decided to keep that bright lookout!

Once or twice during the night, Raoul Hawtrey raised himself on his elbow, and watched his sleeping brother! He had been tormented with dreams of the woman who, far away, was leading Sir Aubrey Hawtrey to his physical ruin!

"I wonder if I shall ever see Combermere?" he mused, and his trembling lips formed the words. "Sir Raoul Hawtrey!"

He fell asleep, murmuring, "I can wait! I must wait!"

But, the giant Julian slept heavily, his only mental visions being of the great success of the new Sheep Company, of his own rise as a Copper King. He saw himself as a leader in Parliament! He saw the meeting at which the "service of silver plate," and "appropriate resolutions" would be voted to the man who had brought fortune out of the chaos of the now defunct New Mexico Cattle Company.

When morning dawned, a fretful, irritated man was Julian Hawtrey, while "Mr. Mont Brun" coolly selected his portable testing-case and made a store of cigarettes for the days outing.

The rude breakfast over, Julian chafed, while "Texas Dave" prepared his own mount, and Raoul, now the composed scientist, buckled on his cases, with chronometer, prismatic compass, testing hammer, and, lastly, his pistol belt!

Picking up his notebook, Raoul lit his cigarette, and said, "I am ready!"

In a constrained silence, they were led out, artfully to the west and south, doubling around to the east, Dave riding his catlike lasso horse in advance and pausing, every few moments, at Raoul's uplifted hand.

Joined by Dave's night watchers and the lank brother of his *fiancée*, the Texan proudly faced a great discolored bluff, stained with the mineral decomposition of centuries, and simply remarked:

"She begins here! There's ten foot of the ore! Now, sail in, 'Mr. Mount Brown!' I'll take you along the whole lode, zigzagging from the bluffs to all the shafts!"

The sun rose and beat down upon the exposed cliffs, the gray mountain hawk hung poised high above them in air, and, Raoul, busy with hammer, blow-pipe, and sketch book, soon became a silent Sphinx to all Julian's eager inquiries.

At last, the scientist turned sharply on his brother, speaking rapidly in French:

"After you have seen the general exposed features," he said, "you should let me work alone! It will take me two weeks to be able to hazard my pro-

fessional name on this! I will need to prepare twenty tons of samples taken under my own eye! Then, when these are worked, one part at Newark, one part in Paris, and one in London, and the last by Ambroise Larue, of Sheffield, I can tell you whether you have a mine or a mudheap! I think that I will have earned my beggarly pittance! Till then, you must wait or get someone else!"

"Texas Dave" whistled vaguely as Julian Hawtrey reddened and strode away sullenly, without a word in reply.

"Damned sharp talk!" he mused. "I never heard a man 'cuss out' his boss before!"

But, the all-important day slowly wore on! There was a pause of an hour for rest and luncheon!

When they returned, tired and weary, at night, Dave modestly forebore to question the exhausted Raoul! The Frenchman, however, tipped Ross a wink, which elated him, and was the beginning of a secret alliance.

And so, the two weeks passed along in busy daily labors. Raoul Hawtrey, calm and impassive, never flinching, watched the three men pounding ore in the portable mortar, sacking up samples, digging into promising spots, and, at last, the three Mexicans, an improvised pack train, had transported sixty eighty-pound bags of ore to the foot of the mountain.

Dave had dispatched his brother-in-law to be, for a train of ten wagons, to Coyote, and Mr. Julian Hawtrey had luxuriated in a fortnight of splendid mountain hunting.

Busied with his gun, he roved from the one outpost to the other, Dave Ross his inseparable guide, Raoul having set up his laboratory in the hidden log-cabin down in the glen.

At night, poring over his sketches and figures of assay and analysis, "Mr. Mount Brown" as yet calmly locked his secrets in his bosom.

There was a cheerfulness in Dave Ross's manner, however, which buoyed up Julian! He had now dropped all idea of bullying Raoul, whose lean face and bruised hands proved the arduous nature of his labors.

The saturnine English brother had been satisfied with Raoul's general plan! It would take a week to break up camp and return to Coyote! A week's rest at the ranch could be utilized in forwarding the sacked ores to Newark, packed carefully in barrels, deftly marked, so as to conceal its character.

While Manager Hawtrey used a fortnight to close up his cattle matters, and effect their final transformation into sheep, the French scientist could personally oversee the working of the ore samples at Newark and forward to Paris and London the similar portions.

Lastly, joined by Julian in New York, they were to depart together for a conference with the millionaire smelter, Ambroise Larue, at Sheffield!

"It would be just as well," placidly said Raoul, "to get him tied down before we expose ourselves! That lot of ore must go on with us, in the ship!"

"Go ahead!" said Julian. "You have my *carte blanche*! And say, old man, I will double your fee, and Ross and I will double your interest, if you make it a success!"

"That's very fair!" cried the delighted Frenchman.

The earliest drifts of powdery autumn snow warned them now to get out of the chilly Sierras, and so, with a deft strategy, Dave Ross saw all his shafts and borings filled up with loose earth, brush fires covering the surface with ashes!

The two watchers joined the rear guard of the party, composed of the three faithful Mexicans and the three principals.

"I'll keep these two fellows under my own eye, at work!" said Dave, as the owners of the Bear Valley Copper Mine (Unlimited), followed their retainers down the hill.

Every vestige of their real business had been removed, the ore samplings being covered with fallen wood and burned over.

The secret was so far safe in their own breasts, and the title was secured!

But, one singular incident had occurred! At the northern camp, one of the herdsmen on watch had

fired at a skulking stranger, evidently seeking to steal their horses, but whether thieving Mexican or prowling Indian was never known, for the prowler escaped.

"Whar there was one, there was more!" said Arizona Bill. "I'm glad we're safe out of the range!"

As the little train set out eastwardly over the mesa, the sojourners in Bear Valley were all well content! Julian Hawtrey lay at ease in the light wagon, behind the column, allowing Raoul and "Texas Dave" to ride on ahead and finish all their confidential chat! The secret expedition had been a great success!

The stockmen all fancied that the three principals were only reconnoitering the sheep range! Julian's ardent hunting betokened the Englishman of fashion, "always killing things," and "Mr. Mount Brown" still was supposed to be a secret French financial agent!

The chilly, dark days of September had whitened the far-sweeping summits, and "Texas Dave" chuckled:

"That there mine will keep itself till spring! There'll be five feet of snow on the summit till we return!"

Dave had artfully "blazed" the location of his twenty shafts.

The ores had all been dispatched, and the returning mules were now loaded with Julian's trophies—bear heads, elk horns, cougar skins, and all the aftermath of his hunting up and down the ridge.

It was clear, at a glance, that the water-power was abundant, the fuel inexhaustible, and could be rolled down the hills.

Raoul had selected a spot where the ore and fuel would descend by gravity, where the descending ore cars would haul up the empties and half loads of supplies.

"Show me a mine like this on the earth!" proudly cried Dave. "We can get Mexicans (the best miners in the world) for fifty cents a day to do all the work on the summit!"

"The Indians?" doubtfully said Julian.

"Our nervy men can stand off the whole tribe!"

laughed Dave. "You will be safer here than in London!"

Dave had artfully sent the two "campers," who alone possessed the secret of the location, to await him at Squire Maverick's, under the watchful eye of the brother-in-law to be—Hiram Maverick.

The return to Coyote was signalized by a grand "blow out" to the men, and Raoul, still silent, but calm and contented, worked over his papers, while Julian and "Texas Dave" finished the inspection of the outlying cattle.

Eschenbach was with them, preparing the final cattle lists, and so, Raoul was left alone with the passion haunted Lischen Eschenbach!

These two walked out alone under the stars the night before Raoul's departure.

"And, you will bring me news of my child?" sobbed the excited woman.

"Yes! And I swear that I will take you away from these brutes on my return," was Raoul's pledge. When he left, he knew that a guilty and a willing slave watched for his return, doing his secret bidding by night and day!

"Only send a list of every letter he writes to this address, and every other thing I should know!" said Raoul, as they returned from their passionate good-bye.

Julian little knew how keen a spy followed his every movement in the week after Raoul's departure. But he was serenely content.

"Mr. Mont Brun," escorted by "Texas Dave" down to Santa Fé, was to double around by Las Vegas and Trinidad, and reach New York, awaiting there his brother's arrival.

Having verified the land grants at Santa Fé, after personally watching the workings of the ore at Newark, Raoul was to go over to Paris and supervise the workings there, while Julian did the same at London.

And then, armed with full knowledge, before them lay the final mental game of wits with the avaricious monopolist, Ambroise Larue!

"Safe in London, I shall be ready to give you my

opinion, when you have finished your task there," said Raoul.

"And I will be soon there, ready with the deeds for one full tenth of the Bear Valley Copper Mine!" remarked Julian, as he handed Raoul his cheque for a thousand pounds in payment of his fee, and intrusted him with a thousand pounds more for company's expenses.

But one comforting hint would the tyrannical expert volunteer. "If we work Larue rightly, you will soon be a budding Rothschild!"

And so, Julian saw the two men depart with a secret joy.

Turning to his duties with Senor Don Andrès Armijo, the crafty Englishman was only happy when the return of "Texas Dave" told him of Raoul's one night spent at Caliente, one day at Santa Fé, and then he read, with joy, the dispatch that the freight had all been received in New York, and that Raoul was flying eastwardly, having passed Trinidad!

The complacent Londoner little dreamed of Lischen's keen-eyed spying, of Raoul's secret intelligence agent in old François Duval, the Caliente watch-maker.

But, two weeks later, the Frenchman laughed, in his cozy rooms, at the Astor House.

"Lischen is a jewel, poor devil! She shall have a few months of comfort, and I'll hunt up the child whom she yearns for!"

For he knew, through her, that the crafty Julian had already mailed several letters to Ambroise Larue, the world-known metallurgist.

"He would betray me, the cold-hearted brute!" laughed the younger brother. "I will pay him off all at once!"

Raoul's telegram from Trinidad, New Mexico, to the waiting Laure had brought him a sheaf of letters from that villa on the Parc de Fontainebleau!

"Richepin must keep him in France, this vicious, degenerate aristocrat, until we have finished with our Sheffield affair. We must get the process! I must play fair till then. I will have my two weeks in Paris! Sir Aubrey must not die until we are back in the

Painted Mountains, and then, Julian Hawtrej, my mother shall pay off the old score to your father, *through you!* Of course, Larue will send his own agent out to examine all! While he is returning Lischen shall help me work a miracle of revenge! These millions shall yet be mine!"

BOOK II.

HIS BROTHER'S KEEPER.

CHAPTER VI.

THE COPPER KING—MISS JUDITH LARUE—IN
THE NET.

None of the scientific employees of the Newark Smelting Works suspected the latent abilities of the polite young Frenchman who was authorized by "Captain" David Ross, of Rio Arriba County, New Mexico, to follow every process of the reduction of the copper ores whose character and value had attracted much attention.

Raoul Hawtrey grimly smiled when the astute owner of the works called the young stranger into his office, where a French interpreter defined the smelter's offer. "I will give you five thousand dollars cash for the information of where this hidden mine is! Ten thousand if you will locate, for me, an adjoining claim! I will send my son out with you!"

Raoul sighed, for he was thrifty and fond of money for the sake of the luxury-purveying power of gold! He merely shook his head and gravely answered: "I do not even know the State where it comes from!"

"Texas Dave," by artful marking and roundabout transshipment, had thoroughly disguised the real point of shipment!

"They would kill me—Ross and Julian—if I tried to lead others into the Painted Mountains! I must wait! Fortune must come to me! And—in the long race—it is between Julian and I—a silent fight to the death!"

Gayly plunging into New York's night pleasures, Raoul awaited Julian's arrival with the sealed working returns of the five tons of his own samples, unopened, in his pocket!

But, the smelter's offer of a hundred dollars a ton for all such ore, finally raised to a hundred and thirty, told of the commercial value of the Bear Valley Copper Mine's product.

"Our profit is in the twenty dollars a ton for working," frankly said the owner, "and, of course, a certain general percentage which increases our saving of fugitive gold, silver, and platinum."

Thirsting with a true Frenchman's homesickness for the boulevards, Raoul impatiently awaited Julian's arrival! It was now the third week in October, and Julian still lingered at Caliente and Santa Fé.

In his unrestrained gayety, the plotting son of Aglaë de Montbrun revolved a hundred plans of reaching Ambroise Larue before Julian could reach Sheffield with him!

"If I were only there," he mused; "but, I dare not leave New York! I will only own one-tenth of that mine after Julian has deeded it to me in London!"

Yet, a sheer self-protective policy forbade him to use the telegraph or pen a line to the owner of the exclusive patent! Even in his intercourse with Laure, he had merely telegraphed to her his intended return, and written that he had been diverted to some professional affairs in the steel regions, having given up all the Western tour, for lack of sufficient inducement! "I must keep a gulf between her and Julian now! By God! He is even capable of marrying her, to get Sir Aubrey out of the way! For, as his wife, she would not be able to testify against him! She must not know of the mine! He must not be able to use her against me! I can, only, across the open grave of Sir Aubrey, keep these two apart! After she slays this fool, I can chase her back into the arms of Abbas and Veronville! She will gain a rich plunder from her dupe Milord Aubrey!"

In all this, Raoul was astounded to receive an imperative cablegram to proceed at once to Paris and finish the separate working there of the two five-ton lots

of the ore, passing through London and urging on the same work there!

"Reserve one ton of each lot for our Sheffield experiments," was the strange injunction which startled the young engineer. "Keep it in the hands of the three different firms. Take the other samples with you from New York and, store 'to my order,' at Liverpool!"

"Damn him! He has heard from Ambroise Larue by cable!" growled Raoul, as he thought of the five extra tons finally prepared as a working deposit for the great Larue. "He does not trust me with a loose pound of the ore!"

Still wondering, Raoul proceeded to the steamship office. He decided to take the steamer for Havre direct, after cabling to London to hasten the working of the ore.

"I can send the reserved five tons as sealed freight to Liverpool, and hold the bill of lading and storage receipt. I'll hasten to Paris, slip over to Sheffield, and then—appear and wait for him at London! I may outwit him now!"

Julian, when he received the engineer's answer, dated New York, Tuesday, October 16, "Sail Saturday on French steamer direct; await you at London; orders all executed," little dreamed that honest "Texas Dave" had carried, when he rode express, with the outward message, a copy of Larue's cablegram, sent to François Duval by the watchful Lischen!

The sly woman had noted the exultation of Julian when he read the messenger's telegram! It was easy for her to steal the hunting-coat of the Englishman as he was locked up, the next morning, for his private tub.

With trembling fingers, she copied it! "They would kill me if they knew of this!" the desperate woman sighed; but, François Duval, artfully stealing up to Très Piedras, telegraphed the contents of the stolen cablegram to Raoul at New York!

"So, you have lied to me, swindled me, and already betrayed me!" raged Raoul, when Lischen's dispatch reached him.

"By Heavens! She is a rare bird!" He read the words of the proof of the mine's value from Sheffield:

"Will take one-half of mine, furnish one million dollars working capital, and share monopoly of patent for the territory with you, privately, if my secret agent confirms your letters. Come on at once."

"Ah! The sly scoundrel!" mused Raoul, as he noted that the dispatch referred to no location, county, nor even the character of the mine. "I will take a hand in this game of wit at long range! French brain against English brawn!"

And then, in pursuance of a rapidly formed plan, Raoul Hawtrey exchanged his tickets, quietly sailed on the Liverpool express steamer under another name, leaving his departure to be published in the list of the passengers of the "Gascogne."

But, true to his unfaltering pursuit of a future glittering reward, "Monsieur Mont Brun" sent a single clause to the Hotel de l'Aigle at Suresnes, which brought the blood leaping wildly to Laure Duvernay's heart.

"Sail to-day. Raoul" was the magic talisman which opened the paradise in her dreams to the waiting woman!

Down along the columned years, Laure Duvernay saw herself moving on in wealth, jewel-decked—the mistress of Combermere!

"Lady Hawtrey," she murmured that next day, as she swept through the Parc, in her superb landau, stealing away from that fretful, querulous debauchee who clutched at her gown and murmured "Don't leave me, Laure! Stay! By Jove! I'll give you *carte blanche!* You must not quit me!"

A thousand schemes were revolved in the young Frenchman's mind as he paced the deck of the "Aurania," swiftly cleaving her way over the darkened waters.

It was no light-minded squire of dames who sat alone in the smoking-room, rolling his Syrian cigarettes, but, a sinewy, bronzed, hawk-eyed adventurer, with his heart nerved to anything!

The Polytechnique graduate was aware that he had achieved a substantial fortune by his unceasing professional energy in the quest! "A tenth of what there is there," he mused, "is enough for any man! But, there

is behind and beyond this, the sweet revenge of a whole life!"

Before him, lay a long future. With gold, he would have the power of unlimited enjoyment; but, with a certain hiatus in the line of succession, he saw himself planted in Sir Aubrey's shoes!

"To be master of Combermere, I would walk over Julian's grave—this clumsy-handed brute who could not wait to betray me like Judas, but sold me out in advance both by letter and cable! There must be some way to outwit him!"

And, singularly enough, the chatter of a couple of California mine manipulators going over to London to shear those fat-witted sheep, the British investors, gave him the needed cue!

They were boasting of old "turns" on the "Big Board" in San Francisco, in the golden Bonanza Days! "I think that I may venture to try that!" he mused, as he returned to the perusal of his mother's diary. He had deposited that sacred testament of a lifelong hatred in the French Consulate-General at New York, much to the discomfiture of the sly Julian Hawtrey.

For, the English Cain had adroitly searched all the luggage of the intending French Cain during those three weeks in Bear Valley! He had bribed the light-fingered clerk Eschenbach at the ranch headquarters to slyly examine even the sleeping man's garments, but only to find that "Mr. de Mont Brun" had brought no papers with him!

"I'll get them yet!" bluffly decided Julian. "Of course, we'll come back here with Larue's expert! I can easily detain Monsieur Raoul at the ranch for a while! With 'Texas Dave' away, this fellow Eschenbach will have some drunken Mexican kill this French dancing-master for fifty pesos!"

It had never occurred to the bull-headed English athlete that his younger brother might have some lurking designs of his own!

But, he would have shuddered, could he have seen Raoul's face as he read the faded leaves, where cry for vengeance tingled in the maddened Frenchman's soul!

There was the history of the double pursuit of the helpless Aglaë de Montbrun by the two English kins-

men! Sir Everard Hawtrey had forced himself upon her, brutally, as an "intending purchaser," and only an awakened self-love, a competitive lust, a cold personal vanity, had swept Colonel Reginald Hawtrey on into the imprudent and fatal marriage!

Raoul's bosom heaved as he read of the husband's jealous violence, of his maltreatment of the mother despoiled of her eldest, of the cold sneers at his wife's artistic devotion, her intellectual enthusiasm.

And then, the meeting with the chivalric Marquis de Verneuil had finally embittered husband and wife to the last! The openly expressed doubts as to the parentage of the younger son had brought Maurice de Verneuil and Colonel Reginald Hawtrey face to face, *à la barrière*.

When the Englishman recovered from the long sickness due to a severe chest wound, he found that his beautiful wife and the second child had disappeared!

And now, Raoul Hawtrey knew why his youth had been so sadly lonely!

For, it was years before the death of Colonel Reginald Hawtrey left the devoted Verneuil free to marry the woman whose hand he had kissed in a dying fervor!

And so, legally adopted as the son of the Marquis de Verneuil, acknowledged by law so as to receive the transmittal of the Château Verneuil at San Félicien, Raoul Hawtrey asked himself that question which no son dares to frame in words to even the meanest of women!

"Am I de Verneuil's son, or the spawn of this dead English martinet?"

The lithe Frenchman bounded to his feet! "I am a de Verneuil! I feel it in every throb of my heart! And yet, for the sake of my mother's honor, I will go on as a Hawtrey, to the last!"

He appreciated the delicate chivalry which had followed his own younger years! His course at the Polytechnique proved the Marquis's hidden interest, and—the frosty old French noble had left it to his wife to give to her second son, the child of her heart, the secret of his parentage!

A glimpse of a lean, old man, stately and courteous,

a red rosette in his buttonhole; a sweet memory of a dark-haired woman, proud-eyed and beautiful, at the public "Examens" of the Polytechnique, told him how true de Verneuil had been to the courtesies of an old-time code now dead and buried in "modern progress."

A smile of triumph wreathed Raoul's pitiless lips as he locked the diary away. "I am free to accept the adoption and live as the Marquis de Verneuil! He was a *chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*! My mother's lover-husband! But, only after my vengeance will I return to France! Wherever this son, stolen away as a living proof of my mother's adultery, a lying witness, crosses my path, I will foil him, be it for name, wealth, or woman's love!"

For, he recognized the craft with which Colonel Hawtrey had sent his eldest child to England, on the pretense that the actress-mother was "no fit person to have charge of her own child"!

The singular obscurity of his boyhood, old Achille Duprat's practical tutelage, was now explained by the loving devotion of the woman who did not wish de Verneuil and Hawtrey to meet in a second duel à l'outrance!

"She gave me a legal name and estate, and saved her own reputation, by those patient years passed alone in retirement at San Félicien with the Marquis Maurice! Death broke the chains which bound her! There is but another death wanting to avenge these long years of dishonor!"

Not a passenger on the great liner knew of the dark designs of the young Frenchman who so quietly dropped off the London train at Sheffield. But he lingered not in the smoky Yorkshire huddle of workshops.

Even the confidential secretary of that great financier Ambroise Larue had no inkling of the stranger's business!

Dashing on through London, Raoul Hawtrey, the very moment he reached French soil at Calais, cabled his arrival to his tricked brother, now in close conference with great financiers in New York City!

For, Don Andrés Armijo had invoked the aid of

American financiers to float the clearing of the finances of the embarrassed Cattle Company.

Busied at New York with lawyers, money brokers, and wading through the formalities of the English Consulate, Julian Hawtrey was happy in effecting the saving of his past investments and the triumphant re-vamping of the imperiled investment in the unsuccessful bovine venture.

"Now for the crown of a Copper King!" gayly laughed Julian, as he sent his last telegram back to "Texas Dave," who was vigorously pushing the preparations for his marriage with that marvel of frontier pulchritude, Miss Hannah Mayerick!

"I am ready for you!" smilingly mused Raoul, now happily domesticated once more at the Hôtel de l'Aigle, in cozy Suresnes, when he received Julian's telegraphed note of warning as to his own arrival.

In the Banque de France lay, sealed, the agreement of Ambroise Larue to deliver to the Marquis de Verneuil (through Raoul Hawtrey, his agent and attorney) one-half interest in the monopoly of the Larue copper-reduction patented processes for the County of Rio Arriba, in New Mexico, in return for an agreement to deliver to the said Larue one-twentieth of the Bear Valley Copper Mine.

The millionaire had not waited a single moment to close the bargain!

"If you get one-half, as you will, this one-twentieth (one-half of my interest) gives you a complete control of the mine," Raoul had frankly proved to the old Belgian's satisfaction.

"You can fix your reduction prices as high as you wish, for the richer you make yourself in that, the richer you make me!"

And then, Raoul Hawtrey had deliberately opened the sealed certificates of the Newark Smelting Company and given to the delighted millionaire the official returns of the working!

"It will be a princely fortune!" cried the gray-headed Belgian. "But, this will be detected—the opening of these sealed papers!"

"Bah!" complacently remarked Raoul, "twenty

francs for a new seal, in Paris, will soon fix that little detail! I have the duplicates to model from!"

When their secret partnership was signed, Raoul exhibited to the astonished Sheffield magnate the copy of his telegram. "You see I was armed at all points! Silence and Division is our motto!"

Before Julian Hawtrey reached England, Larue was in possession of the telegraphed results of the second Paris workings.

And so, the crafty old fellow dissembled with Julian on his furtive visit, and dignifiedly remarked: "Bring me your expert and your working assays, and we will then, go into the affair!"

This was known at once to the man who was loath to tear himself now from Laure Duvernay's encircling arms. For, that happy siren had stolen away from the Parc de Fontainebleu for a week's visit "to her sister" in Lyons.

"I must go over to London for a fortnight," sighed Raoul, as he pledged her, in golden wine. "Then, after one more trip, a paradise of life and love awaits you! Hold Sir Aubrey in your net, you Queen of Spiders, and wait my return from England! For he shall build the pyramid of your golden fortunes!"

And so, the brothers, crafty and false, met in London.

Raoul Hawtrey was perfectly prepared to continue his hidden game of wits with his saturnine brother when the young Frenchman arrived at Julian's chambers in London.

Keenly suspicious, Julian had invited his agent and engineer to share his chambers in London during their brief stay.

"I would like you to remain, as Raoul de Montbrun," said Julian, after their first dinner, "at least until we have financed the Bear Valley Copper Company. You can use a week to advantage here in seeing the London assayers and samplers work out your four tons of graded ore in an actual test! Soames will take you over there to-morrow!"

"And, as to Ambroise Larue?" questioned Raoul with a secret misgiving; for he feared the "double cross" of the two heavy owners.

"I've studied that all over!" seriously said Julian. "It will take me a week to finish my detailed reports to the New Mexico Cattle Company. I may even wish you to go down as Monsieur de Montbrun and give them your ocular witness as to the country, the grade of Armijo's sheep, and that whole operation!"

"Certainly!" said Raoul, politely.

"Then, I will telegraph down for our agent now at Liverpool," said Julian. "You and I together will go to Sheffield, armed with your Paris working returns, as well as the Newark reports. Our reserve of a ton at the two Paris places, one here and the same kept by Larue, will enable him later to sample these altogether and get a standard of the ore!"

"I've thoroughly gone into Larue's whole surroundings! He is our man, and the value of his patented process is incontestable! You must satisfy him as to the general conditions. You will watch him work the ores; you will hold secret the French, London, and American results until he has certified his own! You are to be the sole scientific defender of the interests of Ross and myself. I will handle Larue alone in the business negotiations; then, jointly, we will take his final conditions! I will legally transfer the tenth of the mine to you when you come down to our offices. I have my solicitors making out the papers now!"

Both the acute schemers were well pleased, for Raoul was able to impart the remarkable fact that the differentiated samples from the four-ton lots worked in Newark and the two Parisian laboratories had not varied five per cent. in results.

"How could they?" triumphantly demanded Raoul. "I took twenty face-samples of the exposed ledge, equally divided from top, bottom, and middle along the mile and a half, and twenty others from the same three relative depths of the vein as pierced by the twenty shafts. This gives one hundred and twenty graded samples, of, say, fifty pounds each. These have been shoveled together, mixed for hours, and the five five-ton lots are divided of equal parts of the north, middle, and south of the ledge. Each four-ton lot worked is then ground to pulp, mixed in a mixer for two days,

spread into squares, shoveled into alternation a dozen times, and standard one-gallon measures of the powder are taken from each of the five tons, these single quarts representing, thus, three hundred and sixty selections, which have been mixed and milled for two days."

"I see no great obstacle, but Larue's well-known avarice!" mused Julian Hawtrey, now once more the London *élégant* and clubman, *pur sang*. "He has a daughter, Judith Larue, who will be one of the richest heiresses in the United Kingdom, and, for her, he scrapes the uttermost farthing. Larue, once a common workman, wants a title for Mademoiselle Judith. He is still a Belgian citizen! They say the old widower dotes upon her, and, that she is a marvel of business acumen."

"I venture to suggest," slowly said Raoul, "as this old skinflint is such a character, that you should keep all the working results sealed till he certifies his own to us, and then we have something to show him—something to cope with him on—something to be a measure of the special value of his process!"

"That's a royal programme!" heartily said Julian. "And, to prevent our being in any way spied upon, I will let Soames show you London by night! We will keep the 'Bear Valley Copper Mine' dark until we have bagged Larue! Then," triumphantly said Julian, "his single name will make it a gilt-edged stock from the first."

With a panther's patience, Raoul was an unconcerned reveler at night, while busied by day until Julian Hawtrey, Esq., had knotted up all the loose meshes of the Cattle Company's affair.

Thoroughly forearmed, the sly Soames never knew of Raoul's letters and telegrams to the dainty Comtesse Laure Duvernay. The young engineer carried on that perilous correspondence while daily busied at the Hercules Reduction Works in Southwark! But, apprehensive of a future parting (the doom of all guilty lovers), Raoul only confined his communications to mere daily routine, or a general erotic enthusiasm, strangely sent with neither address nor signature on the sheets.

"The anonymous address at Suresnes will protect me in case of any misadventure in Laure's *affaire du cœur* with Sir Aubrey," mused Raoul, who had provided himself with envelopes duly backed by a type-writing machine. "No woman ever publishes her lover's letters!"

There was not a reference to his own identity in any of these mechanically amatory epistles.

With a curious sense of reserved power, Raoul duly made his "speech" before the now delighted stockholders of the "Company," and received a vote of thanks, while Julian Hawtrey, Esq., was, by loud acclaim, given the service of silver plate and "handsomely illuminated resolutions" which are the V. C. and G. C. B. of the militant financier.

Having shaken the grime of the Hercules Works off his handsome features, Raoul, now mentally fortified on every point, set out to play the winning card of his life at the smoky domain of Vulcan in the West Riding.

It was a cheerless November morning when the brothers descended from the train, which had dashed screaming through the Yorkshire vales, and were heartily welcomed at the Royal Victoria Railway Hotel in Sheffield.

The magic of a couple of shilling telegrams had brought the last consignment of ore down from Liverpool and warned the watchful capitalist of the arrival of the budding Copper King and his engineer. "Am I to go on to the end of the chapter as Raoul de Montbrun?" said Raoul, waking up from his French novel, as they dashed into the town!

"I think it safest!" said the plotting promoter. "Old Larue might be suspicious of any brotherly enthusiasm!"

Their eyes met, and they were abashed; for, the veriest pretense of personal affiliation was useless between them. It was as if Julian Hawtrey's domineering and egoistic English father had projected himself into his eldest son, and that the passionate, alert, French mother lived once more in the bosom of the child of her heart.

Raoul nodded an assent! His deed for one-tenth of the "Bear Valley Copper Mine" was now safe in the

Banque de France, and he gravely gathered himself together for the last campaign of duplicity!

He alone knew that the luckily acquired mine would make his brother a money lord!

"To marry that girl will be his object! I suppose this heavy swell will make the running here," mused Raoul. "I will head him off and defeat him—if it takes my life!"

"He has caught on!" muttered Julian, as Mr. Ambroise Larue's graceful representative, a Belgian engineer, sent up his card, when the brothers had finished their dreary winter repast of chops, sole, and the inevitable eggs, toast, and tea of perfidious Albion!

"Mr. Ambroise Larue had put off all engagements to give the gentlemen an hour at his private office in the great works.

As they drove through the Duke of Norfolk's cheerless domain, where human lives drudge out for mere bread and gin, Henri Bremond, the Belgian engineer and private expert of the magnate, soon fell into an easy camaraderie with Monsieur de Montbrun.

Julian, pulling at his cheroot, moodily followed the chat of the scientists. For the first time in his life, he was relegated to a distinctly secondary place.

But, he was calmly alert when, within the inner space of Larue's huge hive of industry, they halted before the neat separate private office and laboratory of the master mind.

Around them were fifty acres of scattered forges, smelters, and store yards, whose regulated confusion seemed like a playground of the Titans.

Ores, huge masses of iron, copper, and other metals; vast banks of slag, mountains of coal and coke, with droves of begrimed human ants, made up a weird picture.

Everywhere roaring blasts, fiery eyes, gleaming furnace-mouths; huge, glowing, misshapen masses swinging under rolls or trip-hammer.

With adroit finesse, Raoul lingered until after Bremond and Julian had faced the gray-eyed, bullet-headed, solid-looking autocrat of the Copper Kingdom.

"Ah! Monsieur de Montbrun, very good," said

Larue, with a swift glance from under the shaggy eyebrows. "You will be a working companion with Bremond! I shall follow this thing myself. Now, gentlemen, you are both to dine with me at seven. Bremond will bring the carriage for you, at six-thirty. Now for business! I have no secrets from Bremond!" briskly said the Belgian, seating himself at a long table.

"Describe the whole mine!" he imperatively said.

And then, at a nod from Julian, Raoul Hawtrey unrolled his maps, opened his notebook, and, spreading out his sketches, spoke as impassively as if in the classroom.

Coolly eyeing his brother, Julian watched every uplifting of Larue's pencil, as the old man interjected his pungent questions, going to the root of every matter of inquiry.

With admirable tact, "Monsieur de Mont Brun" seated himself, after he had truthfully answered every query as to his previous experience and professional record. There was yet fifteen minutes to spare when Larue broke off the conference. "It will all depend upon the ores, and our workings. That will require a week. If they hold up, I will send Bremond back with you at once.

"Now, gentlemen," said the millionaire, rising, "my daughter will show Captain Hawtrey all the localities. As for you, Sir, let Bremond go with you and verify the seals upon your ores at the railway warehouses. Then, to-morrow, and every day till we are done, I expect you from nine to five, in working rig! We'll fit you out here, de Mont Brun, and you shall take luncheon with me here! When I want Captain Hawtrey, my solicitors will call on him and take the business matters up!"

Ten minutes later, Ambroise Larue, deep in the tangles of a million-dollar matter with a committee of Birmingham manufacturers, had seemingly forgotten the existence of the two visitors.

But, both Julian and Raoul were secretly satisfied. Larue had escorted the new Copper King to the door, bustling him off around the great works in charge of an exhibitor.

"You and I will have our confidential chats at 'The Priory,'" suddenly whispered Larue. "I suppose your expert is not in interest?"

"Only an employee," said Julian, "to whom I have given a small interest! He is to know nothing; but he is professionally reliable!"

When Raoul had gone over the superb headquarters, with its library, assay rooms, laboratory, testing machines, and all the facilities of recondite science, Ambroise Larue darted upon them.

Sending Bremond away, the old man muttered: "You and I can transact our business down in the works! I received all your advance copies of the four workings. If this holds out, it is a modern Golconda!"

With no sign of elation, Raoul set off with Bremond to deliver the ore and inspect the seals, while Julian was adroitly sidetracked to the Sheffield Club and the champagne luncheon, in charge of Mr. Larue's social manager.

When the brothers met in the drawing-room of the Royal Victoria at six o'clock, the keen-eyed Frenchman noted the peculiarly careful toilet of his elder brother. Julian had improved the opportunities of the club visit.

Quickly *au fait* with the local lions, he had artfully led his hosts out upon museum, library, the Albert Hall, the romantic memories of Mary Stuart's sojourn at Sheffield Manor House, the Yorkshire Hunt, and all the "High Life" directory of the outlying vicinity.

But, sleek and crafty, he had picked up the veriest detail of Ambroise Larue's social life! A carriage drive of several hours had made him aware of the splendors of the outlying suburb where Mammon had set up her marble palaces within bronze and gilded gates.

And yet, for all these fancies, the young men were startled at the stately splendor of "The Priory."

The vast hall of Ambroise Larue's royal villa was worthy of the Elizabethan glories of England; but, the great drawing-rooms were laden with the spoil of either Ind—the walls resplendent with the unfading

colors of genius, and the trophies in plate, medal, gleaming star, and glittering order, won by the great metallurgist were proudly displayed on tables of malachite and ormolu.

Raoul was not surprised to be greeted by Ambroise Larue, who, after five o'clock, was absolutely the impassive man of society.

Grave, watchful, hospitable, the ex-workman bore himself with the sedate composure of the haughty burghers of the sturdy Netherlands.

It was only when he raised his eyes to follow the presentation that the blood leaped to Raoul's heart.

Judith Larue stood before him, a revelation of grace and beauty.

"A daughter of the gods!" flashed through the young Gaul's mind as he fell under the spell of her somber and magnificent eyes!

And yet, at the princely dinner, served as if the Belgian hammer man were an Esterhazy or a Demidoff, Raoul Hawtrey drifted into a cosmopolitan conversation with the host, while Julian, a blond Adonis, was soon deep in society matters with the young châtelaine.

A colorless *dame de compagnie*, a reticent Belgian widow, merely accentuated the startling beauty of the only heiress of the Larue millions.

Raoul Hawtrey was keenly conscious of the furtive watch kept upon him by the astonished father, and the studied behavior of his society-haunting brother.

There was even a mild pique in Miss Judith's mind, for Raoul had withdrawn himself into the subordinate.

And yet, as he underwent the "rapid-fire gun" mental "sizing up" of the great intellect at his side, Raoul, with a burning envy, heard Miss Judith and his handsome brother recall a hundred common friends.

Julian had pored over the society "Blue Books." He well knew that Miss Larue had created a sensation on her presentation to Her Majesty.

He knew of the stern pride which kept the self-made millionaire even yet a Belgian subject and so prevented his knighthood, or even, in time, a possible peerage.

Ambroise Larue was deeply interested in this singularly modest young engineer.

It fell out naturally, after the dinner, that Julian ac-

accompanied the ladies to the drawing-room, while Raoul adjourned to the library with the master of "The Priory" for a confidential tobacco seance.

"I can wait!" grimly resolved the Frenchman, as he heard Miss Larue's superb voice ringing out over the notes of the silver-chorded Erard.

"No one must suspect my game—the one which always wins—the waiting game!" mused Raoul.

It was ten o'clock when the discordant brothers were driven home in the host's carriage. The old metallurgist accompanied them to the door in simple courtesy. He watched the young men depart. "That Mont Brun has an old head—a very old head—on young shoulders! Too many virtues!" decided the gray old fox. "But, he is a sound scientist!"

Already a plan had formulated itself in Larue's busy brain! There was a brilliant dream dazzling Julian Hawtrey as he leaned back in silence and puffed his deferred cigar.

Here was a woman of a million, an heiress, a beauty—a Nature-molded queen! "If I double her father's wealth, why not?" thought the egoistic ex-Captain of Lancers. "She knows my blood and social rank!"

Raoul was taciturn in the ride to the hotel.

"I've to be up betimes!" he said. "I presume I shall follow out Larue's orders?"

"Yes! In every particular!" said Julian. "I've given him an order for the three reserved tons of ore at Paris and London. Larue will have Bremond watch the Newark firm's process on our arrival in New York. Bremond is to be the sole director of all; you only go back as my private expert, and will work under Bremond's orders!"

"Very good!" sharply answered Raoul. "I will see the thing through—to justify my report—and I am at your orders!"

But, in the darkened carriage, the Frenchman's eyes flashed fire! "Wait—only wait!" he vowed in his tumultuous heart. And yet, he did not know that two persons were busied with his future in gloomy Sheffield on this November night.

Old Larue laughed at his adroit plan to separate Julian under young Bremond's charge. "I will hasten

them off and delay this young fellow! He shall be my secret mainstay in this affair, and, if he prove sound, there is a man upon whom my mantle might fall! I can have him all to myself in the workrooms! Judith can busy this great Guardsman with flower show, festival, concert, and society's twaddle, while I exploit this Polytechnique élève."

While he smoked his Syrian cigarette alone, Raoul Hawtrey was dreaming of the startling beauty of the woman whom he had so courteously ignored in favor of his social superior.

He recalled every line of the statuesque form; the dark, earnest face with its clear, brown tint; those superbly somber eyes, and the rich coronal of hair sweeping over the shoulders of a Venus de Milo.

Judith Larue brought with her an air of the palace; her glowing, ripe, womanly beauty was fit to be set in the splendid interior of the history-haunted palaces of Egmont and of Horn.

Raoul learned later of the life quest of the millionaire.

A new Quentin Matsys, he had lifted himself to marry one in whose veins the rarest Flemish blue blood mingled with the fiery strains of Alva's bravest Castilian cavalier.

And, accustomed to conquer at sight, that night, as Judith Larue sat listlessly, her maid unwinding the pearls from her mistress's hair, the heiress thought of the silent young Frenchman with a singular curiosity!

"His face was as calm as the bust of the young Augustus, but his eyes were speaking—pleading—thrilling! There is a diamond intellect, this man whose silence has been the highest reserved compliment! I will show Captain Hawtrey a bit of our Yorkshire life, but—of this other man, I will know more!"

And the dull English November sun swung around for a week, until there was no longer an excuse for Raoul being locked up in the testing-rooms with the old magician.

Bremond had returned from conveying back the scattered samples of reserved ore, and, while falling deeper daily under Judith's imperious spell, Julian

Hawtreys anxiously awaited the summons to that conference with the old monopolist which he secretly dreaded.

He was disturbed by Raoul's reticence. The younger brother merely reported his assistance given to Larue, contenting himself with explanation and answer.

Julian was wearied of the glories of the parish church, the beauties of St. Mary's, the ostentation of Town Hall, Cutler's Hall, Corn Exchange, the suburban drives, the exploitation of the Norfolk Market, the dull assembly rooms, the spiritless theaters, and the vapid round of afternoon gayeties.

As for the woman whom he had marked for his own, he was *planté la*."

His sound sense told him that the million must drift into the old man's hands before he dared enact The Conquering Hero! "I must be a Copper King, in truth, before she will wear my crown!"

The complacent suitor little knew how many squires had knelt to this regally minded beauty!

And, in truth, Judith's bosom was unstirred save by her desire to follow out the brilliant young Frenchman's nature! For her father's enthusiasm knew no bounds! And his lovely and beloved child was Ambroise Larue's only confidant.

They had lingered along for ten days, when Julian called Raoul into his own room for a serious business conference. The younger man had showed no sign of irritation when he had turned over all the sealed assays at his brother's call.

And now for three days, Raoul, his work done, had been privately inspecting the dingy city, while the crafty Julian was closeted with Larue in the private office.

"I have done the best I can," bluntly said Julian. "Here is what we have arrived at! Larue will send Bremond out in sole charge of all. He offers to take one-half the mine for two hundred thousand pounds working capital paid in, and all the preliminary expenses. This comes, evenly, from Dave Ross and myself. Bremond is to send five hundred tons of ore here for a final working, at Larue's expense.

"He receives this output in return for advancing all the preliminaries. I have cabled to Ross to have fifty Mexicans go up, under his command, and to get out fifteen tons of the ore from each of the forty workings we opened up. Bremond will sample it there, ship it, confirm your reports, and on this working out up to our averages, Larue opens the mine in the spring, and will have it in full blast before the fall!"

Julian studied Raoul's impassive face in vain.

"This makes Larue the largest stockholder," he said. "How about the results!"

"There is Larue's working return. His process brings out an average of thirty-five dollars a ton above our other four workings! And for his patent process he asks, personally, one-half of the extra saving over the other systems, say twenty dollars a ton. You can go down and go over the whole thing to-morrow with the old capitalist! I told him to show you all!"

"And, where do I stand in the expedition?" quietly said Raoul.

"You are to receive two thousand pounds and your expenses for six months' services! Your interest will finally make you rich! And, as you will not be needed in New York with Bremond and I, you can run over to Paris, settle your affairs, and join us at the Astor House, coming over in the French steamer!"

"All right! I accept!" said Raoul. "Have you heard from Dave Ross?"

"Yes!" laughed Julian. "There's his answer by cable: 'All ready on your arrival, you bet!'"

"Sneaking hound!" was Raoul's comment, as he sauntered away. But, the handsome French brother had two trump cards up his sleeve!

Miss Judith Larue had driven the young engineer all around the citadels of wealth, and her softened voice and shining eyes told him that the proud woman could stoop to conquer.

"I have no secrets from my father! We shall meet again!" she said, laughingly, with her finger on her lip. And the younger brother grimly smiled that afternoon when Larue handed him his legal license and partnership papers for the use of the patent. "I'll start them off, my boy!" he said. "Go over and have

a week's run in Paris! Come back here quietly. I will have you as a guest, at the house. Then, I'll give you your orders! You can catch them in New York!"

"Now! I have him!" smiled Raoul, as he bowed his silent assent.

CHAPTER VII.

JULIAN'S NEW ALLY—AMBROISE LARUE'S INSTRUCTIONS—THE RALLYING AT NEW YORK—SIR AUBREY'S RAPID DECLINE—LAURE'S COMPACT.

Jealous-eyed as two wrestlers struggling for a hold, still the parting between the brothers at Sheffield was seemingly devoid of all feeling.

"Shall I hear from you in London?" said Raoul.

"No!" carelessly replied Julian. "I will only run down for a day! I leave Soames in charge! He fears to go out to America! There will be some last matters with the Cattle Company, and then, I return here. Bremond and I take the next Saturday express! I only ask your secrecy and silence!"

"You will find that I am no talker!" grimly rejoined Raoul. "And, I am still to be Monsieur de Mont Brun?"

"To the end of the chapter—that is, till the 'Bear Valley' is a success! After that, do as you please! By the way, here's Larue's cheque for your six months' engagement, with five hundred pounds for expenses. So you will not need to see or correspond with him—till our return! He will, I suppose, pick out finally the manager!"

"I'm not a candidate!" laughed Raoul. "When I'm rich, I'll live in Paris! I understand all your orders!"

"Devilish strange!" mused Julian. "He's a right ardent chap after women, and yet, he never seemed to notice Judith!"

With what automatic self-deception the egotist turned away to arrange his plans to have two days of social solitude before his departure with the woman who was to crown his life!

But, Raoul Hawtrey, as he was being whirled on to Paris, lost no time in following his hated brother's footsteps. He had only to await Larue's telegram of the sailing of the advance guard to return to Sheffield.

"Thank Heaven for their delay at Newark! It will give me a needed furlough!" was the young engineer's inward comment. "I have nothing to do but to let this crafty old Larue play Julian as a fool to the top of his bent! *Quant à* Mademoiselle Judith, she is like the lovely, shy antelope—all pursuit is vain! But, let the red banner on a wand once attract her curiosity, then, step by step, the lovely quarry will steal out of hiding, and come within my reach!"

But one disturbing cloud lingered over Julian Hawtrey's future when he hastened back to Sheffield, after his last rally of the happy "Sheep Owners," now buoyant with rosy dreams of future success! The monetary strain had been lifted from Julian's imperiled estate! For, on the ratification of Don Andrés Armijo, the New Mexico Cattle Company's shares had bounded upward on the market.

With a quiet craft Julian had marketed all his holdings, and now stood clear on the Stock Exchange with a cool twenty thousand pounds to his credit!

It had been a wonderfully successful campaign! The yet uncrowned Copper King was astounded at the social disappearance of Sir Aubrey Hawtrey.

In vain, he had called at "Brooke's," the "Reform," and even at Sir Aubrey's splendid town apartment. The club stewards could only say that the absentee's mail was forwarded.

At Messrs. Glyn, Carr & Glyn's, these estimable bankers flatly declined to give an address.

"Sir Aubrey is on the Continent traveling, and our Paris agents forward all! We never give a client's address unless directed!"

Driven to desperation, Julian sent the astute Soames on a flying trip to Combermere, and even the expenditure of a ten pound note brought no news farther than that the Baronet was on his travels.

"Damn him! If he would only die!" growled Julian, as he thought it over, on his way back to Sheffield.

field. "Then, I would have something to offer Judith! An old baronetcy, one of the finest Elizabethan places in England, a tidy rent-roll, and—by Jove—perhaps a peerage in the future! For, when spinners and brewers go up to the Upper House, why not a Copper King?"

A mad project of asking Raoul to look up the Baronet for a moment tempted Julian.

"No! I'll let that alone!" he decided.

And yet, urged on by a growing hatred of the whole guilty past, moved by an indefinable impulse, Julian Hawtrey had sent on, by packet post, to Paris the picture of "*La Mystérieuse*," which had annoyed him at every glimpse!

The sending was perfectly anonymous, and it was a carefully laid trap!

"I dare not destroy it!" mused the resentful son. "Aubrey might call the matter up later, if he lives! This French fellow may mention it to me! It will be a test of his sincerity! If he does speak of it, I'll be politely interested! If he does not, then I will know that he has hidden the whole story from me!"

Too conscious of Sir Aubrey's past "disappearances," usually due to some new reigning divinity in that voluptuary's mind, Julian felt that his kinsman's whereabouts was a sealed book to the public.

"I only hope that he will soon turn up his toes!" was the wrathful speculator's adjuration.

But, he sighed as he recalled the banker's guarded statement that "Sir Aubrey was in his usual health!"

For all this, in the two days of a Fool's Paradise, lingering reluctant with Judith Larue, Julian Hawtrey took heart of grace, and meaningly told the imperial beauty of his proximate accession to the honors of the house of Hawtrey.

With kindling glances, the Lady of the Sombre Eyes heard the most passionate and ardent of her suitors.

At last she thrilled him with a glance.

"When your ship comes in, when you are the Copper King, when you have gained my father's confidence by bringing him into this magnificent property, come back to me! You shall have a fair field!"

"And, you will wait?" eagerly cried the excited Guardsman.

"There is no other!" said Judith, holding her hand out frankly, as to a subject.

And, forced to be content with this, Julian Hawtrey was fain to resign himself to Ambroise Larue's dry business campaign, as laid out forcibly before the impassive Bremond and the young man.

"Rather singular, isn't it?" demanded Julian, when Larue notified him that Bremond would take out a twenty thousand pound life insurance, in the favor of his master, in New York, written on the life of the budding Copper King.

"Not so!" impassively remarked the millionaire. "I throw away a hundred thousand dollars in these preliminaries! If you should die, I could not get your title to the mine—there would be no one to carry out your agreement—and so, I pay the first year's premium on you, only to insure my preliminary outlay!"

"I am in your hands!" gravely said Julian, "but I wish to earn you a fortune, and not, this blood money!"

"It is a matter of mere cold precaution!" said the financier, "and, by no means unusual in such large operations!"

When Julian Hawtrey stepped on the steamer at Liverpool, he looked forward to the golden crown awaiting him in the far West, secure in all his crafty precautions.

"There's one good thing," he murmured, as he settled himself in the smoking-room. "I have outwitted this sly French brother of mine! He has no hold on the enterprise; he has not been able to gain an intimacy with Larue, and he is as blind as a bat to all the lovely Judith's attractions! When he has finished his professional work, I will drop him! He shall get his dividends only at the hands of old Larue!"

And, Raoul Hawtrey's dark-eyed accomplice brought a wild flush of triumph to the eyes of her lover that very day, as they sat hidden in the Hôtel de l'Aigle, at Suresnes.

"Richepin is only keeping him alive for the fees

and the huge honorarium! Sir Aubrey is helpless in my hands now! He will not live three months! One heavy debauch will kill him! He can not, he shall not, he must not, leave France! After the inevitable, Richepin will take all the legal responsibility!"

And then flashed over the young lover's mind, the secret hold which he had gained upon Ambroise Larue, the evident leaning toward himself of the somber-eyed beauty, the strange balance of power so craftily effected in the Bear Valley Company.

Larue's private orders to Bremond to return at once, and leave Julian and Mons. de Mont Brun to await instructions flashed before the plotter.

"One single daring stroke, and I can cut my way to her side!"

With lying protestations of love, he lulled Laure Duvernay, the guilty dupe of his villainy, as he planned his visit to Mülhausen.

"Lischen will aid me to my vengeance! She shall meet her child again! This woman will pay herself for her work! But, Lischen's help I need, when I pay off the old score of the past out there at Coyote! I will show Julian Hawtrey a little bit of 'experimental chemistry!' It is the quietest, safest, surest friend of man, my volatile chemical Ariel, who grips the heart in any icy vice!"

Raoul Hawtrey was perfectly satisfied with all the future aspects of his life, as he sped away upon his secret journey.

It was only a twelve hours' run to the quaint old Alsatian town of Mülhausen, bowered up on its island between the Ill, the Rhine, and the Rhine Canal. He had sent out a private agent who for a hundred francs had given him a neat *précis* of the situation.

Secure now in his assured competency, the handsome young Frenchman, as he lay back at ease in his compartment, *en premier*, balanced the advantages of two widely different lives.

"I can count upon enough income from my tenth of the mine and the private dividends from Larue's patent to gild my Parisian life as the Marquis de Verneuil!"

And then, the romantic history of the two patient lovers called him back to dreamy San Félicien, where the old Château de Verneuil had been the theater of his foster-father's self-devotion.

And yet, there was one cloud upon this future, for Larue Duvernay would surely follow him up to the last! He had gained the whole confidence of the beautiful adventuress, who was glad to return to the querulous Sir Aubrey.

For, in his varying moods, the bitter-hearted English aristocrat showered presents, jewels, and money upon the woman who made his gloomy sick-room brilliant, as some gorgeous tiger-moth of the East.

"If she only gather spoils enough," mused Raoul, "she may be frightened back to Constantinople. The fierce intrigues of the harem and the gilded, corrupt life of the Embassies will give her a new career beyond the dreams of romance!"

Raoul chuckled as he reflected how skillfully he had covered all his tracks!

"She is powerless to hurt me now, with Ambroise Larue! For, the old man's control of the mine rests on his utter fidelity to my interests!"

A dream of future eminence fairly took the young schemer's breath away!

"Secret ally of Larue—if I should find favor in Judith's eyes, and this succession fell in, I might have a title to offer her, and all the family skeletons would be sealed up in one chest at The Priory."

It seemed strange that Laure Duvernay should build up the throne for a rival, for the splendid young Flemish beauty who had thrilled the Frenchman's sensuous heart.

"If Sir Aubrey should die under Richepin's manipulations and this Circe's skillful inciting to desperate excesses, then, there is but one stumbling-block in my path! It shall be removed! For, even if I do not win my way to Judith Larue's side, I am the legal heir of Julian Hawtrey. And, how blindly he has placed himself in my power, by baptizing me Mont Brun!"

With an infinite craft, Raoul Hawtrey, plainly

dressed, approached the modest home of Lischen Eschenbach's longed-for child.

Threading the streets of the busy manufacturing town, Raoul was perfectly master of himself. He knew just where the lonely cottage of Rudolf Heffner nestled! He knew how the lonely forge foreman had sullenly locked up his heart after the pretty, light-minded wife had eloped with Eschenbach, the thieving bookkeeper of the Atelier Durand.

A giddy, handsome dog, the young fellow had easily lured away the vivacious young woman, almost a score of years younger than her husband.

And Raoul knew that little Lischen, now a child of six, went daily to le Père François Arouet's parish school, that an old aunt of the eloping Lischen was now installed as housekeeper, and that the saddened man spent too many evenings over his absinthe at the Lion d'Or.

As a lawyer's clerk, it was easy for the visitor to gain the confidence of the white-haired old priest!

Seated in the rectory, where he could hear the songs of the children, echoing through the drowsy hall of the humble school, the sly-minded Raoul told a tale of a repentant mother's interest in the child which she had left as a wee tot of two.

That the sum of one thousand francs had been sent to a French notary to be deposited with proper parties for the child's clothing, nurture, and education, seemed most plausible of stories, and all that the Parisian notary asked was a picture of the child, a quarterly report, and then, the intimation of future benefits dazzled the good priest.

"I must return on the evening train," briskly said Raoul. "*Mon père*, I ask your professional confidence, for Lischen Heffner fears her determined husband's vengeance! Who knows but that the child may bring them together again!"

The exhibition of two five-hundred franc *billets de banque* at once convinced the simple priest of his visitor's integrity.

"It will take time! Shall I confide in old Marguerite, the aunt? She is a woman of some heart and devotion!"

"All women talk!" said Raoul. "Get the old woman to write a full letter to this poor lost soul out in America. Send it and the reports on to Notary Achille Duprat, No. 5 Rue Paradis, Paris. This will be followed up with future help, only if you keep our secret!"

"How can I expend the money usefully without attracting attention and arousing the father's suspicions?" cried the bewildered priest.

A little cross-examination evolved the plan of introducing the little Lischen as a half-orphan, into the Sisters' School and Home attached to the parish!

"The money will keep her comfortably three years and, she will have a brighter home," said Père Arouet. "The old man is sadly in need of this help!"

It was a matter of half an hour for Father Arouet to call the wondering child in.

Raoul soon knew all little Lischen's simple story. He filled her chubby hands with new, shining franc pieces, and Father Arouet, four hours later, brought Raoul at his hotel a half dozen metal tint pictures, the results of the *procès instantané*.

"Now, mon Père," said Raoul, as he pocketed duplicate official receipts for the money advanced in the name of Achille Duprat, "you sorely need a new *soutane*!"

And laughingly, Raoul slipped five gold napoleons into the old man's trembling hand.

Armed at all points, the schemer laughed as he took the night train for Paris.

"They are of another century here, these loitering human sheep!" mused the engineer. He had lingered before the door of the Lion d'Or to see the bearded man of fifty-five sullenly drain a huge dram of absinthe after his day's work in the sweating forges.

"A stern old man," was Raoul's verdict. "And yet, better that the fugitive Lischen comes back with a few thousand francs to blind his glimpses into her past, for she yearns for the child! And it will get her out of New Mexico! I wish no living witnesses on my trail!"

"It will be our last separation?" murmured Laure, two days later, when Raoul bade her adieu. Her •

lover laughed gayly as he clasped a beautiful *porte bonheur* on her rounded arm. His work was now done!

Old Achille Duprat, possessed only of the address of the French Consulate-General at New York, joyed over his protégé's success. For he, as well as the passionate-hearted Laure, knew now that Raoul had but three months of American exile in which to earn a fifty thousand honorarium from some rich Americans. It was the five years' savings of even an eminent French engineer.

"The future lies golden before us, Laure," murmured Raoul. "Be wary! Should any unforeseen event block your plans, take refuge again in Constantinople! There, Abbas Pasha and old Veronville will protect you! You can continue your *Comedie Humaine* with them until I could join you! But, if Sir Aubrey should die, it is gilding your future and mine!"

They had carefully rehearsed the simple, secret cipher which had provided for all contingencies.

"Get old Richepin as deep into it as you can!" urged Raoul. "He will protect his fees and his money interests, and the honor of his Clinique!"

"We are *au fait*, the Doctor and I!" smiled Laure, with a sinister glance which told Raoul of her successful wiles.

Aided by Laure's fear of the suspicious Sir Aubrey discovering her intrigue, the young engineer left Paris unsuspected, for, with her usual craft, Laure sped away to make a railway detour and "arrive from Lyons," and be met by Sir Aubrey's superb turnout at the station! The Queen of Witches trusted, least of all, the domestics in the beautiful villa, for they all eyed her with the fierce jealousy of underlings for the reigning mistress.

As Raoul Hawtrey glided again into his character of "Monsieur de Mont Brun" he pondered, on his way over the Channel, upon his brother Julian's adroit approaches to Judith Larue!

"If he knew of this impending succession, my whole scheme would be in danger!" mused the intending Cain. "But, buried out there at Bear Valley, he can not anticipate me! Impossible if Laure is true, and

Lischen Eschenbach watches for me at the Rancho at Coyote! Should Sir Aubrey die, and Julian hasten back to England, on the receipt of the news, I would then be left powerless! I can not strike him down in England! That would mean my final ruin!"

Ignorant of Julian's fierce desire to use the Hawtrey title as a golden bait for Larue's heiress, Raoul was unaware of the "affectionate interest" which caused Julian (on his last visit) to register his own address with Messrs. Glyn, Carr & Glyn, with his own solicitors, and to lodge money at a private Inquiry Office to send cablegrams as to the Baronet's affairs to Caliente, New Mexico, to be sent on to the Rancho Cienfuegos, at Coyote.

"He can't last long, the vicious beggar!" was the angry comment of the "next of kin," as the handsome athlete saw "No Thoroughfare" in the impassive faces of the bank clerks.

These young financiers grinned at Julian's discomfiture, for Sir Aubrey Hawtrey was always followed by the aftermath of his heartless and desperate love intrigues.

The sly patrician covered his tracks adroitly, little knowing how helpless he lay now, a mere human wreck, under the dangerous spell of Laure Duvernay's velvety eyes!

It was a crisp winter morning when Raoul Hawtrey, darting across London, with no stop, descended from the train at Sheffield! His luggage, on this occasion, was re-enforced by a chosen *batterie de toilette*, for, the crafty Larue had sent the closed carriage, and a van, to convey his guest to "The Priory."

With a magnificent self-control, Larue had concealed his exultation at the coming control of a copper mine which could only exist in the unreaped, treasure-laden Sierras of mighty America, the wonder and mystery of the modern world!

"Monsieur Raoul de Mont Brun" smiled, in a secret triumph, when he was received at "The Priory," by Miss Judith, a new revelation in her triumphant beauty.

"You are my prisoner, until dinner!" the imperious beauty remarked, "for, my father is anxious to speed

you on your way, and he will confer with you here."

Raoul recognized the acuteness of the old millionaire, of whose handwriting in instructions he had even no sample! Merely the signature to the deed of license of the Larue Process, and the copartnership papers, in return for his own deed to the controlling interest of the Bear Valley Copper Mine.

Raoul had been careful to lead his crafty brother Julian into a direct acknowledgement of the ownership of his unclouded tenth of the mine.

"That then, would leave Mr. David Ross, yourself, myself, and 'Monsieur de Mont Brun' the only parties in interest?" formally queried Larue.

"Precisely!" said Julian, "and you will have the deeds of Mr. Ross and myself to the Company, in return for your capitalization, with 'Monsieur de Mont Brun' on his receiving from you his equal tenth of the paid up capital stock."

And so, it was, as a double partner, that Raoul Hawtrey entered the splendid halls of "The Priory."

Secretly resolved in his policy to let the "shy antelope" approach him, Raoul at the breakfast paid assiduous court to the stately old Belgian lady who was the "social background" of "The Priory."

But Miss Judith, secretly pleased by a relief from the instantaneous attack of her ordinary suitors, soon drew out from the romantic wanderer all the story of his adventures in Spain, in the Dobrudsha, his adventures in wild, imperial Russia, in the dreamy Caucasus, in history-haunted Asia Minor, and under the shadows of Istambol's minarets.

Raoul resigned himself to the impetuous questioning of the beautiful woman.

A new Othello, he told his story, and told it simply and well.

"We have traveled far enough in the East," laughed Judith. "Madame De Vrees will show you the house. It is my father's hobby! For you will be busied with him in the evenings until your departure. To-morrow you shall have a long country drive with us, and Madame can point out the glories of Yorkshire."

Raoul felt that this alert young beauty was her

father's sole confidante; he recognized at once Larue's desire to keep his visit *incognito*!

And that afternoon, after feasting his eyes upon the glories of picture gallery and museum, Raoul felt a new fever in his blood!

Judith's superb voice had echoed from below, and in its passionate thrill he felt that she would enslave him!

"Only to be her father's faithful spy, out there in the Painted Mountains! They need me! But, if I stood in my brother's shoes then I might aspire!"

There was no escaping the eager Larue after dinner, when he dragged Raoul to the library.

The young engineer was startled at the profound sagacity of Larue's every plan to wring the golden harvest from the Bear Valley Mine.

"I have gone through the whole matter alone," said Larue. "I have given Bremond every instruction, but, you are to act silently, with no regard to Captain Hawtrey or my expert! Here are your own instructions! Forget nothing, for, I never put these secret matters in writing!"

It was long after midnight when Raoul was released from the great metallurgist's cross-questionings.

And then it seemed as if every rock and crag was familiar to the millionaire.

"Bremond will make a sketch survey and contour reconnaissance of the whole property," said Larue. "You are to execute only my orders, report to me alone, and to keep even this visit a secret from Captain Hawtrey. With Bremond you can not exchange a word upon my business! He never talks!" said the grim financier.

Raoul Hawtrey tossed late that night in his restless dreams, for before him a bright and glowing vision, Judith Larue was leading him on, and, at the last, there was a black gulf yawning behind him! He felt Laure Duvernay's arms winding heavily around his neck, and then he fell—fell—until, with a start, he awoke to a new day in the Palace Beautiful.

It was with an absolute acquiescence that five days later Monsieur de Mont Brun received his stern host's last orders!

"You will go back to Cherbourg, take the next French steamer, having cabled, 'Detained four days by sickness!' Let all this visit be a sealed book! Remember, you are not to write or cable to me under any circumstances! Leave all that to Bremond! If the unforeseen occurs, come here! I will guarantee all expenses and salary! Our secret association must be guarded!"

They had learned to probe each others minds in the nights of keen intellectual rivalry. Their talk had gone over the whole range of science, and the scientific plan for the handling of the mine was now complete to its last detail.

Raoul's heart was stirred by the influence of the majestic beauty who seemed to be her father's only adviser.

In the days of his sojourn, he had been superbly entertained, always under the calm eye of Madame De Vrees, a very lighthouse of propriety.

But in a lonely corner of the drawing-room, on the eve of his departure, Judith Larue rent the veil which surrounded his incognito with a fearless hand.

"Before you go," she said, quietly, "I would tell my father, were I in your place, why you masquerade as Monsieur de Mont Brun. Stay!" she said. "Hear me! Nothing escapes him! He obtained all your Polytechnique record! He knows that your mother was Aglaë de Montbrun! That your father was General Reginald Hawtrey!"

"It was my brother's doing!" cried Raoul, as he poured out his whole soul to the magnificent woman at his side. "He works mysteriously; he feared to use my name as a public organizer, and so, I have been only his scientist in the foreign journeys! In this way, I have been able to aid our fortunes!"

With a consummate skill, led on by her encouraging smile, Raoul told of the fate which had made him a French soldier, while his brother was an English aristocrat.

But half the secrets of his heart did he unfold when Judith thrilled him with a meaning glance.

"Be ruled by me! Tell my father frankly all when he returns from the meeting of Magistrates!"

The young man covered her hand with passionate kisses.

"And, if I were the Copper King to be, if I were the next of kin to Sir Aubrey Hawtrey, if I had Combermere and its attendant rank to lay at your feet?"

"Then," whispered Judith, bending down her state-ly head, "I would bid you to hope, as I did *not* bid him!"

Raoul's heart beat wildly as Judith Larue rose.

"I have no secrets from my father! He has said that his mantle should descend upon a man like you! Wait! Be true to him, and you shall have a fair field! Who knows my father's will? He will secretly follow you up. Be true to him, and every step brings you nearer to me!"

Raoul was alone when he lifted his eyes, for the somber-eyed queen of "The Priory" had fled away! She had, at last, approaching like the shy antelope, lifted her veil to show this strange, romantic suitor the beauty of Vashti, all trembling in a woman's hopes and fears.

When Raoul Hawtrey gazed into Ambroise Larue's eyes that night the old man said:

"It is well! Go and do your duty! Your future is in your own hands!"

The chilly November morning seemed a golden summer to Raoul when he departed the next day, for the pressure of Judith Larue's shapely hand at parting told him that she waited for his home-coming.

In her eyes he read the strange mixture of yearning and self-surrender which tells that Love has fixed his throne within the soft ramparts of a fond woman's bosom!

In the first days of his sojourn, he had been led out, beyond himself, into the supreme exertion of every hidden grace and talent to please the woman who had leaned down from her throne.

But, one last touch of chivalry was left to him! He reached Cherbourg and sailed out in the "Bour-gogne" with no telltale commerce of letter and telegram with the woman who held Sir Aubrey Hawtrey in thrall.

And yet, fierce day dreams tortured him, until he

was set ashore, in the maelstrom of New York, to join the two comrades, now impatient of his delay.

He accepted his subordinate position without a murmur, seeing far down in the future the welcoming glances of Judith Larue's eyes.

"You are to be Mont Brun until relieved by your brother," was Larue's parting injunction. "You have acted wisely!"

As the travelers rushed westward, Raoul found himself a pawn, seemingly, in the game. He only briefly knew that the Newark workings had verified all his scientific predictions.

And he never even suspected the transaction which had placed the heavy sum of twenty thousand pounds as an insurance upon Julian Hawtrey's life, with the Lancashire Life Assurance Company in New York, under Bremond's guidance.

"You are good for fifty years!" said the Company's Medical Actuary to the stalwart English Captain.

"Damn it! I wish Aubrey would make his calling and election sure!" grumbled Julian. "Then, I would have something to live for!"

One ally only remained to the reticent Raoul, as he secretly chafed under his subordination. Achille Duprat had forwarded to him the letters and documents which would gladden Lischen Eschenbach's heart.

"'Texas Dave' will, of course, pay court to these two men!" mused Raoul, "but, with that woman's help I can circumvent Julian. If Sir Aubrey dies, he must never know it till Bremond has gone back! And then I will be a silent worker! But this fellow Ross must be got out of the way! He is clear-headed. Were he to suspect I might be made a sample of frontier vengeance!"

With a well-assumed cheerfulness, Raoul Hawtrey learned of the eagerness of the energetic Texan for their arrival! A telegram at New Orleans announced the readiness of the frontier partner to meet his visitors. The selected five hundred tons of ores were all on the dumps, awaiting the arrival of the new expert.

Brisk, cheerful, and radiant was "Texas Dave" when he met the party at Caliente and escorted them to the little hotel, where the wintry snows had driven the frontier circle into gambling and bar-room, until the spring should return.

"Mr. Mount Brown" indulged in a hearty laugh over the sanguine Dave's advancement of his marriage.

Miss Hannah Maverick was now the mistress of a duplicate cottage, rivaling the Squire's in splendor!

And so, leaving the three to arrange the formalities of their departure in the morning, Raoul sped away to old François Duval! The lonely French watchmaker was jubilant over his patron's return, and, then with hungry eyes, Raoul read the letter of the excited Lischen Eschenbach!

With a keen forethought, he had telegraphed to the watchmaker, and he now knew every detail of the life at Coyote in his absence.

"She will serve my purpose!" mused Raoul. "Poor devil! I will send her home and fill her purse! She will be the *bienvenue*, if she come not empty-handed!"

And so, he left behind him, when the wagon-train and escort pulled out, his latest directions for handling all his mail and telegrams!

"Old Duval, too, shall be rewarded," was Raoul's verdict, for the jeweler had been true to his trust.

Once more the wild, lonely scene of the Cienfuegos Rancho rose up before Raoul Hawtrey's eyes, with its plains covered with a light, sand-drifted snow.

The Frenchman started back when he entered the dining-room of Rancho Cienfuegos. The headquarters was thronged with the upper employees, all gathered in to greet Manager Julian Hawtrey.

A half-dozen Mexican women moved lazily around serving the food, but, in an inner room, Lischen Eschenbach led them to a well-stocked table. Raoul recognized the sly craft of the woman, who only greeted him casually and, as the last of the newcomers.

But, a triumphant tide of health and renewed courage had brought back much of her vanished beauty.

Her husband, pallid and nervous, at once accosted Julian.

"I have only waited for your return to close the accounts, and ask for three months at the Hot Springs!"

It was plain that the bookkeeper was going off rapidly, in the last decline of a quick consumption. Her coming freedom was written on every line of Lischen's buoyant face.

But, she was watchful, and it was only on a pretext of showing him his room, that she found time to whisper, "Wait till to-morrow! They will all drive around the ranch to see the sheep herds! Then, we can be together unwatched!"

And Raoul leaned down and whispered, "Be calm! I have seen your child! All is well! I have good news for you! Beware of Bremond! He is a spy, and the other, a false-hearted brute!"

A light of victory gleamed in the woman's eyes, as Raoul whispered, "When I go, we go together!"

She threw her arms around her promised deliverer, murmuring, "I shall be free from my burden soon! You have seen!"

And then, Raoul, nodding, dismissed her, as he arrayed himself once more in his frontier garb. Even the great revolver lay there, ready to his hand! He was left free to wander around the winter-barricaded rooms while Julian was deep in accounts with the failing Eschenbach.

But, "Texas Dave" was closeted with Bremond, explaining all his arrangements, receiving orders, and proudly telling of the dozen substantial two-room log-cabins now ready in Bear Valley, to receive the advance guard of the copper miners.

The graders were already giving way to the track-layers at the foot of the Painted Mountains, and a two-company military post was to be established in the early spring at the terminus to overawe the nomadic Jicarilla Apaches.

"We will have a free field and a clear swing now!" said "Texas Dave." "The authorities are our secret friends. I've fixed all that, and Don Andr  s Armijo has helped this on."

Three days later, under a heavy escort, Bremond, Julian, and Raoul left the Company's headquarters at Coyote, with six well-laden teams, two good covered wagons arranged for sleeping, and moved steadily over the shallow, crusty snow, the merry pack-mules trotting lightly before them.

Raoul blessed that one day of lucky leisure which had given him the desired opportunity for a secret arrangement with the jubilant Lischen. The woman's heart bounded with delight at the prospect of her release from the thralldom of a worn-out passion.

"You shall have my heart's blood," she whispered, "for your tidings of my child! Trust to me! I know all! And, we will go together—you and I!"

That very day, in far-away Paris, Sir Aubrey Hatrey felt a sudden decline in his flickering life forces.

"Only you—no one else!" he fretfully murmured to the watchful Laure. "Stay with me! Leave me not a single moment! And, you will find that I have not forgotten you! Here are the keys of my own secretaire! The contents are yours, if you do my bidding! And under my pillow you will find a letter! Swear to me that you will fulfill my last wishes!"

"I swear!" muttered the now frightened woman, for, the end of the Belshazzar reign was nigh at hand.

"You're a good sort!" peevishly cried Sir Aubrey. "By Gad! I believe you really have had a fancy for me—the only one!"

CHAPTER VIII.

FOR HIGH STAKES—AT THE BEAR VALLEY MINE—

"TEXAS DAVE" AS A MONOPOLIST—BREMOND'S

RETURN—"YOU ARE TO WAIT FOR DIS-
PATCHES."

"Monsieur de Mont Brun" was keenly regardant of his three companions, as the heavily laden train crawled westwardly to the foot of the Painted Mountains.

Julian's cattle and sheep affairs occupied a great portion of his time, as he rode in the ambulance

with Bremond. It was easy for Raoul to recognize Julian's determination that his artful brother should cement no intimacy with the taciturn Bremond. That sturdy young Belgian was, however, busied, notebook in hand, and Raoul laughed in his sleeve as Julian watched his brother's every move.

"Texas Dave," scorning anything but the saddle, galloped from end to end of the train, a heavy outfit, for Bremond had brought a thorough supply of assayer's stores, light testing machinery, and even a portable smelting furnace, with a horse-power for the fans. Five tons of smelting coke filled two wagons, and showed that the taciturn Belgian was up to his business.

Grave, calm-eyed, with the stolid self-confidence of the Fleming, Bremond was a courteous, though reticent, companion.

Through chilly blasts and scurrying snows, the wagon train wound along, taking five weary days to reach the foot of the mountain.

Comfortable at night, in the covered wagons, their canvas hoods blanket-lined, the voyagers duly met around the camp-fire or at meals.

Dave Ross was guide, head packer, commander of the escort, and general disciplinarian.

There was a quiet elation in the Texan's manner which, at last, attracted Julian's notice.

"Our friend seems another man since his marriage," said Julian to Raoul, in one of the half-hours spent riding in his brother's wagon.

"Ross is no fool!" said "Mr. Mount Brown." "In native ability he is the equal of any man. The sort of a fellow who always has 'something up his sleeve,' as they say here."

"And, so have I," at last, confided Julian. "I have made arrangements with the lawyers of our new Sheep Company to quietly enter all the land, for five miles up and down the ridge. You and I and Bremond and Larue can control it, as equal partners!"

This dream of future acquisition staggered Raoul, who, at once said:

"The surveys?"

"Ah!" complacently laughed Julian. "That is all

provided for. I have had Bremond deputed as a United States Surveyor and the moneys will be paid over, the maps filed, the deeds from the Land Register at Santa Fé will be made out, before any one knows of this rich strike!"

"And, 'Texas Dave'?" doubtfully said Raoul.

"Oh! That clodhopper has enough already in his interest in the Bear Valley! I feared to trust him, for he would have brought the whole floating population down on us!"

Powerless in Julian's hands, appreciating the finger of the distant Larue in this new operation, Raoul mused alone, until Julian suddenly asked him:

"Have you a picture of our mother? I have long wished to obtain one, and I hoped that you might have dug up some of our strange family archives."

With a masterly self-composure, Raoul met his brother's crucial glances all unmoved.

"Only her face I remember, as, at the age of five, she bade me adieu when I was taken to the boarding-school at Asnières. Just a memory of a gentle, delicate, womanly face, beautiful as I remember!"

Julian was busied with stuffing his pipe as he grumbled:

"Devil take the fellows who destroyed all my father's papers! When we are all over this mountain quest, I want to talk to you about family affairs! You see, I fear to betray our relationship, as yet!"

Raoul nodded when Julian left the carriage at the next halt.

"Liar and villain! You tried to trap me!" mused Raoul, watching Julian's tall form as he now strolled up to "Texas Dave," who was indicating a camp. "You would betray him the man to whom you owe this coming future! And me, you would trap!" and then Raoul's eyes rested on the summits of the Painted Mountains, now hovering over them. "Wait—only wait!" he growled.

"That fellow has not brought any papers—he lied to me about the picture," muttered Julian, strolling out to take a pot shot at a skulking gray wolf. "I must get him into my power, but, Dave and Bremond must first be gone! Ah! I'll send Dave away to escort

Bremond as far as Santa Fé when he leaves! On pretense of examining our titles, he can file all his secret surveys, and so, make Dave hoodwink himself! "Then, then, Monsieur Mont Brun, you will be alone with me!"

There was a general astonishment the next morning when "Texas Dave" sent the unloaded pack-train scurrying along up the mountain slopes, and gave orders to double the teams of the loaded wagons.

Even Raoul joined in Bremond's surprise.

"What is this?" cried Julian.

"I've made a pretty fair 'corduroy' road, Cunnel," calmly answered Dave, "all the way up to the mine. Only, I double the teams to haul the loads up! All our freight will be up there to-morrow night!"

"And, the pack-mules?" cried the astonished Englishman.

"They are to pack our ores along the ridge to Bear Valley! From there, we can haul everything down!"

"How did you do this?" wonderingly said Julian.

"I let the railroad graders make the road, and have agreed to let them haul down all the wood they will need for their camp-fires, but, they are to cut no timber!"

The Europeans admired Dave's foresight. There was a permanent camp, with a palisaded corral, and hay-sheds at the foot of the mountain!

"You see, we only need half the wagons up there—the rest can bring in our feed, hay, and supplies from Coyote. Next summer, at the roadway station there," he pointed to the end of the grade a half-mile away, "we can receive and ship direct to Newark or New York, without opening a single car!"

"You are a genius!" exclaimed Julian.

"And, the military post will soon be located up there!" simply said Dave, pointing to a line of trees fringing a sheltered valley. "There's water and feed for five hundred horses there, and easy trails all over the Divide. The two troops of cavalry will take post as soon as the grass is long enough for pasture. That will block Mr. Lo! With a picket-post on top of 'La Loma' there, they can signal a hundred miles in

every direction, on a clear day. And the railroad is going on down to Fort Wingate, through Bernalillo County. There will be twenty telegraph stations along the line, and the camp here, will have its own office. That's what knocks out the Injuns, the railway and the telegraph!"

Both Bremond and Julian were thoughtful, as they recognized the scope of Dave Ross's practical mind.

"No fool!" whispered the Belgian, as he strolled away to take a dozen photographs of the Sierras.

Astonishment followed this surprise, as three hours later, Julian Hawtrey halted his "ambulance" and leaped out in the center of a square made by the twenty huge log-cabins.

There was a stockade corral for the animals, with a ditch of running water led across the valley.

The tall fringe of sighing pines had kept off the snow drifts, and a score of Mexicans, at a great barn made of roughly riven shakes, were now capturing the frolicking mules.

"This is almost a village!" exclaimed Julian, gazing around amazed.

"It's all easy enough!" laughed Dave Ross. "The whole thing did not cost more than a thousand dollars. A dozen axmen, two 'jack-knife carpenters,' and twenty 'greasers' have done all this work. I laid it all out, and the road also!"

With some pride, "Texas Dave" led the way to a sheltered nook, where two double cabins, connected by a covered passage, were already in the possession of the servants. One, as kitchen and dining-room, was the scene of activity, with its rear shed for the attendants.

In the other, standing bunks, rude tables, and chairs, a roaring fire in the great fireplace and chimney, built of mountain stones, told of his preparations for the coming of the sybarites.

"There's a bale of blankets, a dozen buffalo robes, and, as I've got a load of lumber, the carpenter will make any odd things that Mr. Bremond may need! Now, gentlemen, I turn the whole thing over to you! I am at your orders! The ore piles are all ready at the

forty different places—ready for weighing and sacking up.”

Bremond expressed his surprise at the bountiful dinner provided.

“Oh! I’ve a good hunter!” said Dave, “and there’s game enough here to feed an army. The Mexicans have their tortillas, and cigarettes, and coffee! I’ve provisioned the place for a whole month.”

While Bremond, with “Texas Dave,” took a general survey, Julian Hawtrey gave his brother his laconic instructions.

“You are to simply aid Bremond; do nothing except under his orders, and let me confer with him on all important matters!”

On that winter evening, as the sun went down far to the west, gleaming upon the lightly silvered plains and the softly mantled Sierras, with thoughtful faces the four men gathered around the great fireplace.

“I can finish up easily here in a month,” said Bremond, “and all that I ask is that Monsieur de Mont Brun aids me, and that I have arrangements to forward letters and telegrams, if necessary, to Europe!”

“The messenger can ride to the ranch in two days, and from there on, in one more, at Caliente, you can send cables, so, in one week, you can have anything answered! Twice a week, I will send in the mail, so as to catch the regular bi-weekly mail at Coyote. Eschenbach, or rather,” laughed Dave, “his pretty wife, is the Postmaster. That German’s a powerful smart man,” said the Texan, turning to Julian. “But, a great whisky drinker. Now, whisky drinking is a profession by itself, and usually takes up all a man’s time! You’ll need a new bookkeeper soon! That fellow will be dead in a month!”

“I know it!” quietly said Julian. “I’ve put young Saunders, the second foreman, in with him, to learn all the accounts. Saunders is a college-bred man, though a cowboy, and he does not drink!”

The weather singularly moderating in a week, “Bear Valley” was a hive of activity. Bremond and Raoul Hawtrey were busied from morn till night on the practical labors of the mine. The ores being

assorted and sampled, were dispatched by wagon-loads to the far-away railway at Caliente.

Mounted on his lank lasso horse, "Texas Dave" was the central figure of the busy scene, galloping from the camp at the base of the mountains to the headquarters, an alert, brave, resolute figure!

No one knew of the purport of the long conversations in French, which Julian, Bremond, and Raoul carried on by the fireplace at night, or at the side of the furnace, temporarily set up in a rude log-shelter, where the creaking horse-power made the roaring fan whirl with its hundred multiplied velocity.

Bending over the assayer's tables, Julian darkly plotted the furtive survey of the presumably valuable extensions of the lead with Bremond.

"The only way to do is to send Dave off to Coyote for a week!" quietly suggested Raoul. "We can have the surveys all done, *in his absence!* I can make the maps here! He will not suspect!"

There was an inner "holy of holies," the carpenter having framed off a little room for Bremond's personal "parlor magic!"

"That a splendid idea!" cried both the listeners.

It was on the night before "Texas Dave's" departure on the general inspection tour all along the line, Bremond having some idly fancied commissions at Caliente, that Julian addressed Dave Ross before them all!

"We must be careful that no one works in on our lines!" the brooding Copper King said. "Any gossip now would bring five hundred people in on us in a week. And, we have no real authority to keep order; only a mere right of self-defense!"

"No one can leave this camp!" sternly said Dave. "I have given orders at the foot of the mountain to hold on to any of our stragglers! And all my men will obey me!"

"That's all right!" coolly said Julian, "but they might come up—outsiders—and watch our proceedings! They might get in on the ground near us!"

"I've got men riding the ridge! I'll prevent that! Trust to me!" said Dave, with a quiet smile, as he loaded his six-shooter freshly, "for contingencies!"

During Dave's absence, the survey of the coveted grounds was rapidly carried on by the indefatigable Bremond and the cheerful Raoul.

Julian Hawtrey chafed in an internal excitement, as the days progressed—the southern five miles had been all surveyed and the lines duly pegged, and the two scientists were now busied on the northern area.

The main work was in bulk all under control. Every trip of the ten wagons carried away forty tons of the selected ore, carefully sewed with rawhide thongs, in hide bags, all duly ticketed and numbered. No envious prospector could tell the final destination or origin of the contents by any volunteer spy work.

Julian's fever increased as Bremond frankly acknowledged the results of his rough workings of the ore. There was a pile of fifty twenty-pound ingots of the crude metal now safely stored away under the Belgian's bunk!

"Yes!" said Bremond, in answer to Julian's final inquiry. "The mine is all that you have claimed! There is ore enough in sight for twenty years—a superb water-power, timber for charcoal at a minimum cost, and, as Monsieur Mont Brun says, the mine will really work itself and deliver its product at the railway station, by gravity, and using the free water-power. A switch of two miles will enable us to put the ore on the cars by a line of traveling buckets! And, as the assays made here run over the average of our New York and European workings, I think I am safe in saying you have all the money that man can want in the product of this wonderful lode!"

Two men's hearts burned with a restless fever to see the production begin, brothers in blood, enemies at heart, and each, seeing in this unreaped wealth of the Painted Mountains the way to share Judith Larue's throne at "The Priory."

"You may wish to communicate in Dave Ross's absence," said Julian to the silent Bremond, when the ranch messenger rode up with a sheaf of letters.

"I have already cabled to Larue that the mine is all right!" said Bremond. "I sent the dispatch down by your 'Texas Dave'!"

"Then, we need not worry!" said the startled Julian, half conscious of the mastery of the great money king.

"You seem to have no friends!" he said, half-fretfully to Raoul, who was calmly engaged in rolling his Syrian cigarettes, his one luxury.

"I have no correspondence—I am all alone on the earth!" placidly replied the Frenchman. "It saves just so many postage stamps!"

And yet, Julian Hawtreys was not misled by Raoul's apparent calm.

The young engineer was as invariably restless as a wolf, and only unceasing employment wore him down to a semblance of quiet! What was going on at that bedside in the sumptuous villa at Fontainebleau?

He had already betrayed Laure Duvernay, in his own heart! Would the adroit beauty keep her word?

"I shall never get him alone again!" was the burning inward thought of the desperate would-be lover. "Once that Bremond is away, I could act—but only if—if Laure has closed Sir Aubrey's eyes!"

They were busied in the finishing of the northern survey as the time for "Texas Dave's" return approached. Julian, "a mighty hunter before the Lord," rode far ahead of them, circling around to keep off any intrusion.

The fat, acorn-fed deer wandered idly under the branching pines, avoiding the six-inch snow, and haunting the cleared circles under the mighty spreading forest branches.

The crack of Julian's rifle sent the silvery squirrels chattering from tree to tree, the mountain jays flew along the dim forest aisles, and the gray wolf stole away at their approach. Only a stupid-eyed Mexican lad, mounted on a mule and leading another, followed Julian to bring in the game.

It was in the afternoon before Dave Ross's expected return, when Julian, Bremond, and Raoul gathered at the last corner-post.

"There is nothing really left," said Bremond, "but to draw in the last line. I can calculate that in the sketch map!"

"Then," said Julian, suddenly, "I will take the papers. You must finish them to-night! Sign and certify them, Bremond, as Deputy United States Surveyor. I will make an excuse, leave 'Texas Dave' here, and, slipping away on business, post over to Caliente, run up on the road to Santa Fé, and pay for the land, secure its entry, obtain the Register's receipts and—" he broke off suddenly, as a horse came galloping along the ridge, the charger's feet spurning the light snow.

They all started back, as "Texas Dave" reined up, holding out a packet of letters and telegrams, without a word!

"You have stolen a march on us!" growled Julian, his face aflame with rage.

"The telegrams were marked 'Rush! Important!' and so, I doubled one day's ride," simply said Dave, sitting there, uncovered, his hat in his hand.

The three men wondered inwardly at the sudden color and altered manner of "Texas Dave," as he quietly dismounted, and, pulling down the squared corner stake, tossed it contemptuously far away.

"I can see that you have been at work surveying here, gentlemen!" the vaquero gravely said. "And I must deal squarely with you! All this land here for five miles up and down the ridge is private property, regularly surveyed, duly entered, and—*paid for!*"

"And to whom may it belong?" shouted Julian Hawtrey his face ablaze with a violent passion.

"To my partner, Don Andrés Armijo, and me!" quietly answered Dave. "The titles, undivided, are all in Squire Maverick's safe, and, I have Don Andrés Armijo's power of attorney!"

"You have deceived us!" roared Julian, stepping back. "It was the trick of a——"

"Here—none of that talk!" sharply cried "Texas Dave," as he noticed Julian's hand resting on the butt of the great Webley revolver. "I'll fill you full of lead if you pull that gun! I don't blame Bremond or Mr. Mount Brown, but, you set in to rob me, and survey and enter this land, in my absence! Don't deny it! Don Andrés telegraphed me to look out, for he saw the deputy surveyor appointment of your

friend here, entered in Santa Fé. Why didn't you act square with me, Cunnel? I have given you a fortune for nothing, that's all!"

There was the gleam of a revolver in Dave's hand as he spoke. He slowly put his weapon away, and said:

"There are no pegs driven on our surveyed property! We pegged it out, had an inspector come here, pulled the pegs up, and, left you to do your work!"

Sullenly, the vaquero leaped on his horse and rode away, followed at a distance by Julian, mounted.

The two engineers, on foot, slowly plodded home.

"It seems," said Bremond, as they re-entered the cheerful cabin, "that Mr. David Ross is a man of some little native ability—as you said! I will tell you, Mont Brun," he slowly said, weighing each word, "I have received telegraphic orders to hasten home the moment that the five hundred tons of ore are shipped from Caliente. Larue has telegraphed orders for you to Captain Julian Hawtrey. You are to await his letters here!"

And then, the Belgian disappeared in his den, to write up his reports.

Raoul sat long before the fire, dreaming of the star-eyed beauty of "The Priory."

The dinner long awaited Captain Hawtrey's reappearance, and the servant announced that the Copper King was closeted with "Texas Dave" in that growing monopolist's own little cabin.

To the utter astonishment of Bremond and Raoul, the two appeared in a perfect amity.

The meal was half over, when Bremond said:

"I shall need a messenger to answer Larue's dispatches and telegrams!"

"Get them all ready, then!" calmly rejoined Julian. "Ross and I are going down to Albuquerque, to see Señor Armijo. We will be away for ten days! I will take all your mail and send the telegrams ahead with a boy on the gallop!"

"In that case," gravely answered Bremond, "you must give me an hour to-night with Monsieur Mont Brun. I shall probably leave for Sheffield, post-

haste, before you return. Mont Brun can take charge of all here in my absence."

"And I, will remain here with him, and hold the mine!" sternly said Julian, "until the new company sends a permanent manager."

"I must go to Elba, to look after Larue's iron mines," simply said Bremond. "I shall cable him for instructions! You must send any answer out to me on the dead run!"

"I will make all the arrangements," said Julian, as he carefully finished his dinner bottle of claret.

Wondering at the sudden change of heart of the two quarreling men, Raoul Hawtrey sat alone by the fire, while Julian Hawtrey finished a long, private colloquy with the now alert Bremond.

Then, without a word, Julian sought "Texas Dave's" cabin, and two long hours passed away.

In that glowing fire, Raoul Hawtrey saw many changing shapes, as he rolled cigarette after cigarette.

His active mind easily discerned Julian's plan to go away with Dave Ross, and, using the Cattle Company's affairs as a lever, build up at Albuquerque a triumvirate with the enormously wealthy Mexican Armijo to control all the outlying leads!

"He will leave Larue, and Bremond, and I out of this," correctly judged the brother, now thirsting anew for a full revenge. "One third of these valuable lands is better than a sixth or an eighth!"

In a moment, Raoul recognized the hidden influence which had pushed forward the railway, located the army post, built the road up the mountain, and forced "Texas Dave" on in his singular activity.

Raoul knew the story of the old Chihuahua grandee, Don Andr s Armijo, a mere boy when Mexico lost its northern possessions. Married to a former Mexican Governor's daughter, Armijo was a power in New Mexico, and mines and ranchos, cattle and sheep, haciendas in Sonora, rich silver mines in old Mexico, all gave him money power, while the defeated Dons of New Mexico aided their fellow aristocrat in every way to circumvent the hated Yankee!

Political influence, army favors, contracting cabals, all aided Don Andrès in his vast enterprises.

Raoul was still glowering at the fire, when the door opened and Julian strode in, and, throwing himself on his bunk, went to sleep without a word of comment, when he had divested himself of his clothes.

But, with flashing eyes, Raoul sat there by the fire, listening to the hoarse boom of a giant owl, perched in a pine near by.

"That means death!" said Raoul, inwardly, as he slowly sought his corner! "This cold egotist is beginning to betray Larue now! I will leave it to the Belgian to post his master! My time will come!"

And so, when the two men rode away in the early morning, Raoul was calm and smiling.

Bremond had departed to urge on the final operations of his practical tests, after ordering relay teams to hurry out the balance of the ore.

"I'll send all the teams up here, load the rest, get it to Coyote," said "Texas Dave," "and send on teams from Caliente to Coyote, to have it all on the railroad before you can reach the town!"

"Then, I am free to move," joyously cried Bremond.

"You shall have your telegraphic answer by relay messenger," said Julian. "If you leave before I return, telegraph me from Caliente to Albuquerque. I'll run over to Trinidad, meet you there, and confer with you. Mont Brun can hold the mine, alone, until my return!"

Shamefacedly, "Texas Dave" had led Raoul aside.

"I will not forget you, pardner!" he simply said. "And Cunnel Hawtrey and I are good friends again! See, he has given me his big revolver, and—he takes mine!"

"Very good!" said Raoul, now as watchful as a tiger. "When I leave you shall have the other!"

"I will keep a share of my part of the outlying lands for you!" cried the genial Texan. "You have been dead square in the whole game! Trust to me!"

And then, waving his hat, Dave rode down the trail, cutting off the slow descent of the wagon.

"A brave man and a true!" sighed Raoul as he joined Bremond in the laboratory.

There was little time left to the departing Bremond. While the camp and roads resounded with the yells of the freight-drivers, at night, Bremond packed his luggage and papers, by day, toiling in the furnace and assay office, and superintending the carpenter boxing the selected samples and his gathered cabinet.

"A treasure-house, a veiled Golconda, a treasury of the world!" was Bremond's final verdict upon the Great Divide. "For ages, the gnomes have guarded this wealth, and to whom will it bring sorrow, to whom the madness of sudden fortune, to whom joy and years of peace?"

It was the eighth day after the departure of the men who were now plotting with Armijo, when a Mexican lad spurred his exhausted pony up the road.

Bremond, whose lips had never uttered a comment or reproach upon Julian Hawtrey for his evident double-dealing, opened his telegraphic dispatches, and handed them to Raoul without a word.

The excited Frenchman read Larue's imperative cable directing Monsieur Mont Brun to take charge of the mine with full power.

And a second from Julian Hawtrey, at Albuquerque, fixed a rendezvous with the Belgian at Trinidad.

"Larue telegraphs that I am to hold the mine till the working manager arrives. You to report home instantly. Mont Brun to take charge of the workings!"

"That's the whole story!" said Bremond. "I would simply continue and get out all the ore you can, making wagon roads to the places I have selected for opening. Larue evidently trusts you, and, I suppose, Hawtrey and you will have to go back to close up the new organization. There's no hurry though; the mine, as it is, could be sold for a million pounds. It's a wonder of the world!"

Three days later, Raoul Hawtrey was the sole tenant of the headquarters cabin, the silent Belgian having left him with a meaning hand grasp.

"Be true to Larue! He trusts only you!" was the young scientist's adieu. "And, his favor means a fortune for life! But, your own interest here will give you all the money any man ever needs!"

The wagons were all dispatched with the departing scientist's freight, under convoy of "Texas Dave's" wagon-master! The second light wagon and escort wheeled away, with the happy voyager, and for an hour, Raoul watched it speeding away over the shining plain below.

The lonely man laid his glass aside at last!

"When Julian Hawtrey comes up that hill the next time, I shall be ready for him!" mused the plotting schemer. "There is left but one thing now, and that is to get rid of 'Texas Dave' for a week!"

Not even to his own heart did Raoul Hawtrey dare own the devilish scheme which beat upon his brain.

Active and untiring, he urged all on, and, with a singularly close scrutiny, examined every inch of the ground to the north and south of the Bear Valley Mine.

He was rewarded for his persistence in, at last, after a week's search, finding the outcroppings of the mother lode, some two miles to the north and some three miles to the south of the present workings.

And, in his wanderings, he had discovered many side trails on the Sierra, used by the ingenious Jicarilla raiders to screen their furtive incursions toward old Mexico.

When, five days later, Julian Hawtrey and "Texas Dave" returned, the Copper King was overjoyed at Raoul's fiery activity.

For all of Bremond's belongings had been forwarded, there was already four hundred tons of ore on the new dumps, and the roads for the permanent openings of the mine were well under way.

It was an embarrassed dinner, however, that at which Julian and Raoul vainly tried to read each others thoughts.

"There is not much to tell!" said Julian. "The old watchmaker sent you a bundle of French papers. Poor Eschenbach is lying dying! The Cattle Com-

pany's affairs are all right! And Bremond's freight will be pushed right on after him."

With a desperate effort, Raoul Hawtrey guarded his smiling, nonchalant calm, until Dave Ross had disappeared to his own cabin.

Julian Hawtrey, moodily smoking his pipe before the fire, at last broke the silence.

"I had a half-day with Bremond, over at Trinidad! He will transfer the working credit for the mine at New York City, to me! He will cable to Larue from there for some needed authorities on matters of which we talked. And, as we understand it, I am to represent the Company, you to have the sole working control of the mine, until Larue sends back his man after a full conference with this able engineer. Then of course, we shall have to go over and settle up the new organization. If one of us stays, it will probably be me, and I wish you, if you go home alone, to take Eschenbach's widow over to Europe. Poor devil! He is now at death's door! If you have letters or commissions, I will send 'Texas Dave' down in a week to bring up Bremond's final dispatches from New York!"

Raoul nodded, in his heart stifling a wild throb of delight!

"At last! at last!" he murmured. "And you have just that week to live, my Copper King! The brute!"

Raoul nursed a now murderous hate, for, day by day, Julian, now lazy and luxurious, had never referred to the negotiations with Señor Armijo.

The complacent Englishman now amused himself with his hunting, with long, secret conferences with "Texas Dave," and with rambling over the property now secured so thoroughly by the new locations.

Raoul Hawtrey went his daily round, inspecting, urging on the improvements, and making three assays daily of the averaged ores, also securely bottling a pint of the pulp ground from the prospecting pulverizer.

But, the twelve horses working the gear wheel of the machine and smelter fan were no more patient or silent than Monsieur Mont Brun.

Raoul was standing, watching the little experi-

mental smelter, when "Texas Dave" approached him carefully, after a few days.

"I go down to-morrow morning, Mount Brown," he said. "Now, Señor Armijo and myself have given Mr. Larue, over there in Sheffield, a chance to come in with Hawtrey (as an agent); and join us two in these extensions. We will know his answer when I bring back Bremond's New York dispatches! Cunnel Hawtrey don't feel so warm as to giving you an interest! But, Armijo and I have decided that we wish you to look over our property—if the others don't take it up! We will give you the same fee. Ten thousand dollars for your mapping, sampling, and a sketch of the workings, with a plan of the plant. Old Armijo can open it alone—he's a game old Don—and we will give you a tenth of that property, if you make it a success! Not a word of this to Hawtrey—he's no friend of yours! Why, I know not!"

"And, if they take it?" said Raoul, with an eagerly bounding pulse.

"Oh! Then we can force them to take you in, as our adviser, on these same terms. The Don and me ain't going to trust to Mr. Ambroise Larue's expert alone! *Not on your life!*"

"Very good!" said Raoul. "This remains a dead secret between us, in any case!"

Together, the next day, Julian Hawtrey and his now remorseless brother together watched "Texas Dave" gallop down the sloping road.

"There goes a man who has neatly outwitted old Larue," said Julian. "If he and the Spaniard hold to their terms, they will control the output of the Divide."

"It matters not to me!" grimly said Raoul. "You always underrated 'Texas Dave'! He is a very sagacious man!"

"Fool that he is!" said Julian, turning sharply on his brother. "See here! I wish you to secretly search for evidences of the lead, above and below us, on their property! I telegraphed Larue to offer them a round sum for a bond for six months to take half of the property at a valuation agreed on by their expert and ours! They insist on Larue's

cash offer for a half as the working capital! Now I've sent this frontier fool away to wait at Caliente for dispatches, and I've telegraphed Bremond not to send any for ten days! In that time, you can carefully examine the ground! But, I fear 'Texas Dave's' spies! He is watching us! I will pay you a royal bonus if you find the mother lode for me! Should you desire it, I will go out and verify it! Then I can send a man in with a dispatch! Saunders will ride in and send it from Barranca, while 'Texas Dave' is fooling around at Caliente! In this way, I will have Larue's instructions before Dave returns!"

"But, how shall we be absent together? We might be followed!" said Raoul, growing pale, as he saw his enemy at last drifting within his reach.

"I can meet you secretly! No one must know! I will apparently leave for a visit to the camp at the foot of the mountains! I am my own master here!"

"Very good!" said Raoul. "You watch the camp now and I will begin my tracing up of the outcroppings to-morrow morning!"

"This must be a dead secret!" growled Julian.

"It will be!" firmly answered his brother.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SECRET MESSENGER—"HE IS SIR JULIAN, NOW"—
THE TRAP SET—ALONE IN THE FOREST—MISS-
ING—THE RIDERLESS HORSE—"THIS
IS INDIANS' WORK."

There was joy in Dave Ross's heart, as the hardy frontiersman pushed smartly homeward along the lonely road toward Coyote! The prospect of a week at his terrestrial Paradise in Caliente caused him to forget all his secret wrath at Julian Hawtrey's double dealing.

"A colder hearted brute never walked!" mused Dave, as he reflected how callously Julian had ignored any claims of the young engineer, whose skillful work

had brought Fortune's golden shower tumbling down upon "Cunnel Hawtry."

"Texas Dave" well knew now that the Bear Valley Mine was to be a success beyond his wildest hopes.

And yet, blithe at the prospect of a week's rest with his beloved spouse, who now rejoiced in a new piano, Dave proposed to "go over the whole matter" with that acute frontier lawyer, Squire Maverick.

Pressing on, doubling out of the way of the camps of the now busy freight line, Dave rode merrily out on the second morning, joined by an old frontiersman from "up the Divide."

Disdaining all escort usually, yet, on this January morning, Dave Ross was glad of company. For the old stockman whom he met, had reported an unusual activity of the Jicarilla Apaches.

"Thar's been a deal of signal fires lighted this last week. They have found one or two stray white men killed, too, up the ridge!" said the grizzled old herdsman, as the men pricked smartly eastwardly. "I'm right glad that the troops will be down here in two months!"

"Yes!" sententiously answered Dave, "and as soon as the iron is on the railway, and they open the Bear Valley station, the damned Apaches will be cut off from crossing down on this side. All that they can do is to go far out west and sneak down through San Juan County!"

While the borderers spoke, Dave's eyes roved far southwardly, to where he saw a single horseman now rapidly moving along, in a bee line, cutting off a great five-mile bend of the road, and heading directly for Bear Valley!

"Something unusual!" mused Dave. "Perhaps it's some runaway horse-thief, some fellow who has killed a man and wants no one to meet him on the road!"

The lone rider was a mere black speck, miles away to the west, before a disturbing thought flashed over "Texas Dave's" mind! Was this a secret messenger of Julian Hawtrey's?

"He's a mean coyote—a sneaking dog—that fellow," mused Dave.

And then, a doubt of the real urgency of his mission assailed him!

Agnostic as he was, "Texas Dave" never dreamed of the sly wit of Lischen Eschenbach, for the distant Mexican lad, riding as if for his life, was the bearer of a telegram which François Duval had sent out to Coyote, with his private instructions.

The gleaming eyed woman gave her instructions to the lad, with a glance which froze the boy's blood!

"A hundred pesos if you get this to the Frenchman, with no one seeing it! Ride off the road all the way! If you meet the big Englishman out there, you have just come to ask for work at the mine! Go in with no sign of haste! Find the young Frenchman! Give him this letter—secretly—and this telegram! If you fail, I'll have you lassoed and dragged till you are dead! If you bring me his letter back in two days after he dispatches you, I'll give you fifty pesos extra!"

And, well the wild-eyed "mozo" was earning his reward, as he strained his eyes toward where huge columns of smoke told of the busy human beehive in the Painted Mountains!

Tidings of life and death were in his bosom as the boy rode madly on.

As night fell, he could see the baleful fires of the Apaches glittering out on a dozen distant hills.

But, well he knew that the hundred armed laborers and fifty teamsters and workmen at Bear Valley could easily beat back any war-party of the Jicarillas from behind their log cabin fortifications! It was daylight on the second day after "Texas Dave's" departure, when Antonio, the mozo, trotted into the corral at the mine, lit his cigarette after turning in his pony to feed, and then, carefully forewarned, awaited the Frenchman's appearance.

Raoul Hawtrey was pale and haggard with the worries of a sleepless night when he left the headquarters cabin to assign the fivescore Mexicans to their daily labors on the dumps, the new roads, and at the prospecting mill and smelter.

A mighty internal conflict now raged in his heart!

The one golden opportunity was presented, by Dave Ross's absence, for the fierce adventurer to cut his way to Judith Larue's side!

"Of what avail all my plans if Sir Aubrey lingers on?" he confessed to himself!

He had left his brother sleeping in the easy luxury of his late hours.

Secure now in his assured fortune, Julian Hawtrey had brought back from Albuquerque, private stores and wines worthy of his lofty financial station *in possé*.

A ferocious spasm of joy convulsed Raoul's face, as Antonio drew the startled man aside.

"She sends you these!" he said. "You must not betray me! They would kill me!"

"Wait here for me!" cried Monsieur Mont Brun. "You must leave as soon as you have asked for work and been denied. Rest your horse! Take a good meal! I will come back to you!"

Carelessly calling the Capitan of the laborers, Raoul said:

"See what this wandering lad can do! He wants work, he says. Give him a good meal, at any rate, poor devil!"

Locked in the little assay room, Raoul, with a beating heart, tore open the bundle in which Lischen had artfully hidden the fatal telegram.

"By God! Sir Aubrey is dead at last!" muttered Raoul, when he read the lines of the cablegram.

"François Duval, Watchmaker, Caliente, New Mexico:

"My brother died yesterday. A week for news to reach England. Notify and answer. Napoleon will remain and settle his estate. The Doctor is in charge.

"JACQUES."

The excited man started up in a murderous frenzy! There lay his defenseless enemy, sleeping the sleep of luxurious sloth, with his broad breast bared to the assassin's knife!

"Ah! Softly! I forget myself!" was Raoul's exclamation, as he drained a glass of brandy.

In the little cupel furnace, he carefully burned the

dispatch, and hid a knot of blue ribbon in his breast. It was Lischen's private signal.

Suddenly, he stooped, for a little slip of paper had fluttered down to the floor.

With a beating heart, he read the lines:

"My husband died last night! I wait now only for you, and my freedom. I shall not leave the ranch till you come! Will watch for and intercept all Hawtrey's letters and telegrams. I handle all the mails now, as Saunders is away. Send the boy back! I will try and open Julian's mail and telegrams, if anything comes. Be sure not to betray me! I would lose my life!"

This paper crackled for a moment in the blazing cupel furnace, and then, Raoul Hawtrey walked calmly out into the cool, fresh air!

"To-morrow, to-morrow," he murmured, "I will make the discovery that he wants. *He is Sir Julian now!* The cold-hearted brute! False and mean to Larue, to Dave, to myself, and only seeking now to swindle poor old Armijo! To-morrow night I will divulge my find, and then—the next day—he shall know—more than he does now! His father can tell him all!" Laure's cipher is safe!

"Monsieur Mont Brun" was unusually cheerful when he joined the Copper King at the nine o'clock breakfast, which "Sir Julian" now affected.

"All going on well?" was the Englishman's casual question.

"Yes! I will see the gangs started at work on the furnace, and then, steal out alone to the northern extension!" reflectively said the dark-eyed French engineer. "Bremond has described some promising indications there! I will take a horse, and a 'mozo,' and ride up there! I hope to find the lode which showed on its upward curve over the saddle, reappearing within two miles!"

"Then, I'll hunt to the southward, to-day!" craftily planned Julian. "And ride along the ore dumps, and show myself among the workmen! Be careful that you are not followed! I trust no man alive now, after Ross's dirty tricks! Damn his frontier impudence! He shall pay for it yet!"

Julian had whistled his two dogs away long before Raoul mounted his tough pony.

He had sharply questioned the Mexican lad, who was now lounging idly around the paseo.

"There is no work for you here," he said, in the hearing of the Captain. "But, you can surely get a job at sheep herding and shearing down at Coyote!"

Closeted for a moment with the lad, Raoul gave him a golden Mexican doubloon.

"Ride around that hill, and meet me!" he said.

A half hour later, Antonio was speeding back to Coyote, with a verbal message.

"Tell her that I will be down there inside of two weeks! She is simply to wait! That is all! And if you make it in two days I will give you another doubloon, when I come! Silence, and I'll make your fortune, later!"

Two hours after, from a high knoll, Raoul Hawtrey watched the departing lad striking smartly across the plain, directly for Coyote, going as the crow flies.

And then, finding the burned-out hollow of a great standing tree, he lit a bright watchfire, and lay down to dream of the trap which should ensnare the man whose very name and title he now thirsted for.

"Cain quarreled only for the first fruits! I will have this man's very life, his name and place, his fortune, and perhaps—his sought-for bride! He shall feel the vengeance of the dead woman whom his father dragged down to a long heartbreak! It is the Marquis de Verneuil who avenges Aglaë de Mont Brun! He is no brother of mine!"

The moody wretch lying there hidden away from the sight of man, gloated over the title which now was Julian Hawtrey's lawful heritage!

The superb estate of Combermere, the annual rent-roll, all the advantages of power and place, and, lastly, the splendid charms of Judith Larue tempted him to a brother's murder!

As the evening shadows fell, he stole out from his retreat.

"How can I do it?" he muttered, his teeth chattering, as the gaunt specter of cowardly Murder spread its darkened wings over his tortured brain.

"It will come to me—the right way! Let me be but once alone with him!"

With a fiendish craft, he had toiled in secret, and exposed a continuing bed of the precious ore which had so quickly allured the covetous Ambroise Larue.

"This will lure him up here!" he joyously reflected.

When Raoul met Julian at dinner, he complacently eyed the two fat bucks and the giant cougar which had fallen to the new Baronet's gun!

"I have something far better than this to show you!" he whispered. "I have found the true vein, rising up, two miles to the north!"

They were alone, and the luxurious Julian had drank deeply of his favorite wines.

"Show it to me, to-morrow, then," said the excited Copper King. "I will rise early with you! You can order my horse out, and I will tell the foremen that I am going down to inspect the camps at the foot of the mountain. You can ride around the ridge, westwardly, and wait for me at the Burnt Rocks! Then, you can guide me secretly to the newly found croppings."

"Very good!" complacently remarked the tired-out Frenchman. "I will go and sleep, for, I am worn out with uncovering the ledge!"

"See here!" sharply said Julian. "We must cover up all the croppings again. I do not wish Armijo and that sly frontier fox, Dave Ross, to know of this! They would, of course, raise their price, and rob me! I will see to your reward later!"

When Raoul threw himself on his bunk, he lay there, like a crouching tiger, his embittered heart panting, as the red firelight played upon the massive frame of Julian, now amusing himself at a game of solitaire.

They were alone in the cabin, and Raoul affected to sleep, while the saturnine Englishman finished "t'other bottle," and then staggered heavily to his bunk.

So, side by side, the two alien hearts lay, while the whistling night winds shrieked without!

For hours, Raoul lay silently counterfeiting sleep, as the swaying pines above him sang a chorus deeper

than the undertones of the grim Greek tragedies.

For, Murder, Cain's hellish gift to man, is an immortal art, a legacy of Hell, the undying curse which clings to wealth and the pride of place.

The morning dawned raw and chilly, and yet Raoul Hawtrey was astir betimes.

Long before the ease-loving Julian had roused from his semi-drunken stupor, the young engineer had given his orders for the day.

The breakfast was finished in a moody silence, for chilly winds whirled the light snow around the cup-like valley in a feathery mist.

Raoul had already pondered over a hundred schemes to effect his deed without a name! And yet, the moments dragged out, for a restless fever burned in his veins! He feared a self-betrayal!

And still, he affected a due unconcern, as Julian filled his pocket-flask, crammed his shooting-coat pockets with cigars, and then, buckling on Dave Ross's six-shooter, caught up his double-barreled English rifle.

"I will now go and tell them that I may sleep at the lower camp to-night," gruffly said the unsuspecting Julian. "They may just as well not catch me lying! Who knows what spies that fellow Ross has set on me!"

Raoul was standing a half hour later, in the door of the cabin, when Julian rode over from the corral!

"I may not return till to-morrow!" he said, in the hearing of the furnace foreman. "Push everything along! I want to get out of here as soon as Ross returns! And, I may take you with me!"

Slowly, Raoul mounted his pony as Julian dashed away down the incline, a commanding and marshal figure.

"He is Sir Julian now," moodily mused the crafty Gaul, as he trotted away down the ridge. "He must never know it! He has gone to his death—the fool!"

It was three hours later, when Monsieur Mont Brun rode up from a canyon on the western side of the ridge, to the secret rendezvous, and found Julian stamping his feet and swinging his arms, by the side of his fretting horse.

"Let us get along!" said the Englishman. "I've half a notion to go back to the house! It is a piercing cold day!"

"Follow me!" cried Raoul in a sharp, decisive tone. "It's only three-quarters of a mile north, and down in a little glen to the east of the main ridge. We will be sheltered from the wind, there!"

The horses dashed away, with loosened rein, and ten minutes later, Raoul drew rein to the right, passing a knoll from which they could clearly see the end of the railroad grading and the rough shed camps of the Copper Company's freighters.

"I think that I can get down easily here!" said Julian. "Be careful that no one sees you return!"

"I'll take care of that!" shortly answered Raoul, as he leaped from his horse, leisurely tying the animal.

"Hurry up!" cried Julian. "My horse stands—never mind him!"

He tossed his rifle aside, under the shade of a tree, and then, unbuckled his pistol belt and its heavy load of cartridges.

"I want to see how deep this ore is!" the Copper King said, as Raoul produced a pick, a light steel bar, and a shovel, from the burned out cleft of a pine.

"I had hard work to uncover this, alone," said the Frenchman, whose heart was now wildly beating in an agonized suspense! "Thank Heaven, the trees have fended off the snow! I would have missed the ledge, but for this!"

The ground was slippery with drenched pine needles and a chill rain of freezing drops fell from the gloomy branches over them.

For five minutes, Raoul grimly watched Julian, with mighty strokes, breaking up the rotten masses of ore, across an uncovered area, from which Raoul had scraped the surface muck.

"I don't know how deep it is," said Raoul, approaching the exhausted man with catlike tread.

"I'll soon find out!" said Julian. "If it goes four feet, then it is a real blanket vein. It shows here twenty feet broad!"

Ten minutes later, Julian was buried almost to his knees, and then, he slowly turned his head, as he said:

“Toss me my coat! I’ll take a——”

There was a heavy, muffled report, as the great Webley revolver rang out its message of death, and the strong man, shot from behind, pitched forward headlong into the little hole which he had himself dug!

Over him, with a savage glare in his eyes, stood the murderous coward, who caught but one impotent glance of rage and despair from his victim’s wildly rolling eyes.

“Now, we are quits, Sir Julian!” shrieked the incensed assassin, as he fired point blank into the broad breast of the helpless man.

With a wild neigh of terror, Julian’s horse dashed away down the glen, and, tripping upon a fallen tree limb, went rolling over and over down the steep declivity.

An awful silence followed! With an energy born of despair, Raoul dragged the body downward, to where a bluff rose a sheer hundred feet.

A frenzied coward now, he ran back and picked up Julian’s hunting belt! Seizing the bowie knife, he drove it deep down between the shoulders of the prostrate man.

“There must be no mistake!” he growled, in his frenzy. Then, madly casting the blade far away into the canyon, he gave the corpse a last vigorous shove!

Over and over it fell, with a clattering thud, and then the wretched murderer, peering over, saw it lodged far below, hundreds of feet away!

With a frantic haste, he threw the belt and weapon after the body!

“The coat and rifle, too!” he murmured, as he tossed them over the bluff. Then, gathering up all the three tools, he untied his own trembling steed.

It was at a turn of the trail, where a dizzy descent to the west, made the passage perilous, that he freed himself from the burden of the useless implements. They fell a sheer thousand feet below the ridge! He had not forgotten, following out the damned counsels

of his night vigils, to abstract a few of Julian Hawtrey's own pistol cartridges from the case at the ranch, and he now slipped two back in the London-made belt!

He had ridden down out of sight on the west, and passed the camp far below the old cabins of the watchers, when he stopped in a place of safety, and, with his handkerchief, removed every trace of the firing of his pistol.

Digging a hole, in a soft mudbank, with his boot-heel, he then buried the telltale rag, after tearing it in pieces.

It was not later than eleven o'clock, when he rode in a zigzag course from ore dump to ore dump, from the road cuttings to the various shaft holes, and busied himself calmly superintending the labors of the plodding Mexicans.

But, a new tenant was in his bosom now—the ringing voice of fear-awakened conscience, crying for a brother's blood at his hands.

He was dumbly exhausted in his mind and yet he feared to leave his men! For, he now craved the excitement of drink!

"My God! If I should betray myself!" he muttered, as he gladly crouched with the men, and shared their noontide coffee!

The many questions of the gang foremen had diverted him, and yet, he already felt a horrible gnawing desire to revisit the spot of the murder! Had he left any telltale evidence?

"If the new working is discovered, I must deny all knowledge!" he mused, "and, Ross will think that Julian" (how that name grated!) "was slyly exploiting the new ground himself!"

While he lingered irresolute, a horseman dashed madly up!

"*Rally every man!*" cried the American corral master. "The Indians have attacked our lower camp!"

The ridge soon rang with warning cries, as the excited Mexicans raced back to Bear Valley for their arms.

"Go on! Go back!" cried the corral master to Raoul. "'Montana Bill' has put our men in place!

I'll warn all the other men! Get back and help him!"

Raoul, brave enough now, dashed away like the wind, and in fifteen minutes, rode into the alarmed headquarters, where the startled men were already armed and rallied.

The outer ridges of the little valley were being held by well-armed pickets, who were all posted on the high ridges around the cuplike depression.

There was a short conference, when Woods, the corral master, reported that all the men were safely in.

A teamster had seen the firing below, when half way down the grade, and then, cutting loose a mule, had galloped back with the first alarm!

There was no immediate danger now, for a hundred and fifty fairly well-armed men were busied at quickly making Bear Valley defensible.

There was a store of ammunition on hand, for a hard struggle!

But, the question of saving the men cut off at the lower camp, and of sending for succor, now presented itself!

"Montana Bill," the head smelter, an old Indian fighter, was elected commander-in-chief with Mr. Mont Brun to handle the Spanish-speaking forces, Raoul only confessing as yet, to a little broken English.

"We must smuggle out a messenger to get the news to Coyote, and then, the stockmen will attack the Indians from the rear, while we fight them, in front!"

Two brave Mexicans soon stole out of the camp, mounted on the fleetest horses, with directions to make a detour and reach Coyote, riding for very life!

And then, the thirty Americans under "Montana Bill" decided to make a careful sortie, and cut out the beleaguered teamsters below!

A rearguard of fifty of the Mexicans followed them to cover the drawing off of the men below!

"You will find El Capitan Julian below at the teamsters' camp. He is an old soldier!" said Raoul, with a feigned anxiety. "Obey all his orders! He will bring you through all right!"

Secure with seventy men, twenty of these on guard at the crests, and fifty in reserve, Raoul Hawtrey at last sat down to a wolfishly devoured meal!

His eyes were thick and bloodshot when he left the brandy bottle! For in his heart, the tide of his life was throbbing the refrain, "Sir Raoul Hawtrey! Sir Raoul Hawtrey!"

He longed to leave the accursed scene of his damnable deed!

"Yes! Yes!" he mused. "They will soon come to help us! Ross will be back soon! And I, will turn the property over to him and go on as far as New York! I must get to Caliente and cable this news. But, they must find him first! I dare not leave till he is found! But, I am saved! For they will all say, '*This is the Indians' work!*'"

A line of sentinels was posted on the inclines of the road, left by the reserve, and, just before the night fell, a wild cry went up the line, "Saved!"

It was midnight when the trampling of many feet aroused the haggard Raoul.

"We have beaten off the Indians! They left five dead behind!" cried "Montana Bill." "The men are all here safe—only one wounded!"

"And, Captain Hawtrey—where is he?" cried Raoul, in well-affected concern.

"Ah!" cried "Montana Bill," dropping his rifle butt. "He never reached the camp, poor fellow! They may have carried him off for ransom, or else to burn him! There were about sixty mounted Indians in the gang, and they scattered and went south. We have already sent three mounted men on to Coyote for help!"

Monsieur Mont Brun had forgotten his patois in the excitement.

"He must be found, dead or alive!" shouted Raoul. "I must break through and cable this news to Europe! I am only a subordinate!"

"Well!" sadly cried Bill, "we can do nothing but wait till daylight! Our men need rest and sleep! We might run into an ambuscade!"

"See to the men!" cried the Frenchman. "Bring all the chiefs of parties over to my cabin, for a con-

ference after the men have supper, and let the rest go to sleep!"

"All right! I'll see to the guard reliefs and watch all night!" said Bill. "They may have cut Captain Hawtrey off and murdered him, or he may have got away into the hills, and he might come in by morning! He had a fine horse and he was well armed!"

It was three o'clock before the council of war terminated. Raoul frankly told the astonished men, "I speak English well! I was ordered by the owners only to talk French, so as to keep outsiders from annoying me. Now, when we find Captain Hawtrey, or his body, I must get into Caliente and telegraph for a successor—if he is dead! I have no power, only to handle the scientific part of the work here!"

With a guard of ten men around the cabin, Raoul slept heavily until the dawn! He now knew of the gallant defense of the teamsters behind their hay bales, and of "Montana Bill's" killing one Indian and wounding another.

"Thank God!" mused the now self-composed murderer, as he saw a strong search party leave at day-break. "I am not suspected!"

He left the active command to the brave "Montana Bill."

It was four o'clock, on a day of continued alarms, when the corral master led the party back. "Here is his horse, wounded, bruised, and with the saddle stripped off!" cried the frontiersman.

"Captain Hawtrey is still missing! It looks as if he had tried to reach the hills, and had been shot from his horse, or else thrown, when wounded."

Around the watchfires, they decided to await reinforcements before a further search!

And then, secure in his infamous victory, the man now heir to a stolen title, gave way to secret, heavy drinking, to drown his fears!

It was four days after the attack when sixty mounted vaqueros dashed in from Coyote!

Their leader sought out Raoul Hawtrey at once!

"Mr. Mount Brown," he said, "here's some urgent telegrams for Sir Julian Hawtrey!"

Without a word, the Frenchman secluded himself and opened the packet.

There were full telegrams from Bremond at New York, ordering Julian and Raoul to leave Ross in charge and proceed to New York to meet the new manager to be selected by Ambroise Larue.

And from the London solicitors, there was a dispatch to the man who had died, unknowing the golden shower of Fortune.

"Sir Aubrey Hawtrey died at his villa at Paris seven days ago. You are the present Sir Julian Hawtrey! Return at once for succession and probate of will. Our congratulations. Answer, with instructions as to Combermere and the personal affairs of the deceased."

The signature, "Walter Addiscombe, Solicitor, Temple Bar, London," gave to the murderer his needed cue.

Two hours later, Raoul knew all of the driving of the Indians south, of the discovery of the body of the boy Antonio, his returning messenger, stripped and scalped, of the raising of the settlers to pursue the Indians, and of the speedy coming of United States troops!

"The devil fights for me!" mused Raoul, as he now patiently awaited the arrival of "Texas Dave."

And then, sadly, he gave orders for a hundred men to be spread out, a yard apart, to skirmish northward over the ridge, in search of the man of whose safety all men had now despaired!

"Find him!" sadly said Raoul. "Nothing else shall be done! To-morrow, we will send all the others out!"

It was late in the afternoon when a single horseman spurred down the ridge.

"They are bringing him in!" he cried, as he drew up his steed. "He had tried to get up the ridge! They evidently shot him off his horse, and the body rolled down the cliff out of their reach, for, it was neither robbed nor scalped! The saddle-girth must have burst, for his gun, belt, coat, and revolver were all scattered around! He had not even time to fire his

gun! They were secretly working down to surprise us! Poor fellow! He was shot twice!"

No one wondered at the young Frenchman's frantic grief!

"Bear him in here!" he cried. "No hand but mine shall touch him! *My friend, my noble employer!*"

Before the next night, Julian Hawtrey lay in a hastily dug grave, under a lonely clump of pines.

Prowling animals had already disfigured the manly and symmetrical frame, and, only a circle of rough men, with bared heads, stood mute around the grave, as "Sir Julian" was laid away from the sight of men, with neither bell, book, nor candle!

"I must leave this accursed country forever!" cried Raoul. "I did not come here to fight battles!"

And, all the force now knew of the empty honors which had descended to the strong man, cut off in the flower of youth!

The regular work had been resumed, when "Texas Dave" rode sadly into the camp a week later.

All the stockmen had gone home, save a mounted escort of ten men.

"I learned the sad news from the courier," said "Dave" Ross, after he had exchanged full confidences with the now dejected Raoul. "I sent off a man, at once, and instantly cabled the news of the Colonel's death to Larue and to the Cattle Company, and I also telegraphed to Bremond at New York! What are we to do?"

"There is but one thing left to do!" almost shrieked the Frenchman. "You say that Larue cabled his acceptance of the proposition to purchase the extensions! I must telegraph to Sir Julian's solicitors, and, as soon as we hear from Larue, I will leave you in charge, hasten to New York City, report by cable, and then, go to Sheffield. The new manager will have full directions for you! You and Señor Armijo must handle the two properties, till I get to Sheffield!"

"And, poor Colonel Sir Julian's property?" sadly demanded "Texas Dave."

"Box it, seal it up, make a list of it all! I will send out instructions from his lawyers! As for me, I will

pack up, go down to Coyote, take that poor widow, and go on to Europe! Poor Julian! He wished her to go home!"

"Thar's a curse on that Cattle Company!" mourned "Texas Dave." "*First*, Major Gibson—*then*, Eschenbach—*now*, Colonel Hawtrey!"

And four days later "Texas Dave" said "good-by" to his agitated partner, standing by Sir Julian Hawtrey's grave, under the moaning pines.

The dead Baronet's effects had all been duly sealed and listed, the papers all turned over to Raoul, and a half company of United States soldiers were stationed above and below the ranch.

"You can explain all to Ambroise Larue," said Dave. "There'll be two thousand railroad men working here in a month! The Indian scare is over! I'll have this grave well fenced off! I suppose the lawyers will have him removed to England! God! what a brilliant fortune he missed! And, he evidently was trying to get back and warn the camp! *He died for us all!*"

When Raoul stepped into the ambulance, he turned to the Texan.

"I'm sick of tragedy and horror! I shall never see this camp again! You will be the richest man in New Mexico in a year! Come and see me at Sheffield—or over in Paris. I will wait and post the new manager in New York! Telegraph me—Astor House!"

The escort rode up, and then, Raoul handed out to Dave Ross his heavy Webley pistol and the cartridge belt.

"*There's the other English pistol!* You now have the only two in the world! I have left you all the ammunition, and the cases, have the directions to order more!"

"Good-by, my brave, honest pardner!" cried Dave. "Here is my own—in exchange—keep it as a token! You have done your duty by poor Colonel Hawtrey! I'll have to come over to Sheffield now, I suppose, with Don Andrès Armijo's power of attorney. Tell Larue that we accept!"

"A gallant, noble fellow!" mused Raoul, as the wagon bore him swiftly on.

Four days afterward, in the same vehicle, he left Coyote station at night, to be hurried to the railway at Caliente. As they drove past Eschenbach's lonely grave, Lischen threw her arms around her lover, screened in the dark interior.

"Another life opens for us! Happiness—delight—far from this accursed frontier!"

And, glad of any human protection, Sir Raoul Hawtrey folded the wanton to his breast!

CHAPTER X.

THE INSURANCE COMPANY'S PROTEST — ORDERED TO SHEFFIELD—"THE CIENFUEGOS COPPER COMPANY, LIMITED"—A LITTLE RUN OVER TO PARIS.

Raoul Hawtrey sternly warded off all the excited gossips of Caliente, as he hastily prepared his personal belongings for the voyage to New York, on his arrival at the town, seven days after leaving the horror-haunted camp.

No one noticed the departure of old François Duval, the watchmaker, who gladly accepted the unsuspected murderer's invitation to visit New Orleans, at his expense.

And so, the old Frenchman, a mere pawn in the hands of the wily Raoul, escorted Lischen Eschenbach, now a silent Niobe, to Trinidad, via Alamosa, while Raoul, at "Texas Dave's" earnest pleading, took the road south to Santa Fé, for a long business conference with Don Andrés Armijo.

It was easy, by Taos, for the red-handed Copper King to rejoin the two other travelers awaiting him at Trinidad.

Through François Duval, the crafty Baronet, *in posse*, had learned every detail of the final scattering of the band of Jicarillas, to whose hands the untimely death of Colonel Julian Hawtrey was now publicly ascribed!

Officials, contractors, frontiersmen, politicians, and journalists were all busied in rushing in troops, by popular clamor, and the incipient railway company saw golden profits in this miniature frontier war!

Covered with plaudits for his bravery in defending Bear Valley, Sir Raoul Hawtrey gladly saw Caliente fade away behind him forever.

He had not forgotten to visit Mrs. "Dave" Ross, and that city Solon, "Judge" Maverick! There was not a whisper left behind him to excite the faintest suspicion. He was still "Mr. Mount Brown" to the simple frontier folk.

And, the cowardly hound breathed freer, two days later, when he had concluded his final conferences with Don Andr  s Armijo, at Santa F  .

"*Mi amigo!*" said the courtly old Don, delighted at Raoul's fluent Spanish. "There is but one thing to do! David Ross must temporarily replace the lamented Se  or Julian Hawtrey, in charge of the new Sheep Company, which now succeeds the old Cattle Company. I will aid him with funds and credit, and give him my advice. I could not well act for them, as I am on the other side of the business. You, my dear sir, must bear my letters to the Company in London. They should have a meeting at once—they must cable their orders to 'Texas Dave!' I will sustain him until you arrive! You must address them and explain all! The death of our poor friend and partner will hasten the railroad building, as a large force of soldiers will be moved in here!"

The Don paused and reflectively sipped his claret.

"As to the two copper mines, I leave all to the sagacity of Mr. Ambroise Larue and yourself! 'Texas Dave' can come on with my full power of attorney, when the Cattle Company sends a duly authorized manager on! The new manager of the Bear Valley Mine can relieve Dave, up in the Painted Mountains! I would suggest that when the new man examines our ground, north and south, that the whole property be merged as one company. I will give or take—'Texas Dave' will follow me, or, I will meet Mr. Larue in capital, leaving all the scientific handling to him, his new manager, and you! Dave and I intend to set off a tenth (undivided) of the new ground for you!"

The courtly old Don was filled with sorrow as Raoul announced his final decision:

"I shall never return here! Indian fighting, assassination, and these sudden alarms are not in my line of life! I shall probably associate myself with Larue's great English business."

"I am sorry, very sorry," sighed the Mexican. "You have been the brains of the whole thing!"

Skimming along northward to Trinidad, Raoul leaned back in his cushioned car seat, with an exquisite sense of enjoyment! His cowardice had built up an impregnable suit of invincible armor over the shrinking scoundrel's form.

"There is not even a trace of suspicion!" he chuckled.

With due skill, he had directed the telegraph and mail authorities to return all matters pertaining to Sir Julian Hawtrey to the solicitors of the deceased gentleman in London.

A cautionary telegram to the bankers of the Bear Valley Copper Mine and the Cattle Company, at New York, prevented anyone from drawing funds!

"It is all a sealed book, now!" he mused. "The secret is buried in that nameless grave, out there under the sighing pines! And, the dead never return!"

He had divided his rough frontier garb among the escort vaqueros at Caliente, and now, Monsieur Mont Brun was again a tourist *à la mode*, the type of Parisian elegance.

A victorious smile wreathed his lips as the train, dashing around the southern point of the Taos Range, shut out forever from his sight the now hateful Painted Mountains, whose grim hollows had echoed to the sound of that deadly revolver.

"I am safe at last!" he exulted. "The men at the camp were all blindly hoodwinked! Even 'Texas Dave' knows nothing! Neither Don Andrés Armijo nor the Caliente gossips, have suspected a murder! At the Coyote station, the Rancho Cienfuegos, Eschenbach is lying dead in a drunkard's grave; I have the sly, rapturous Lischen with me! She knows of nothing but the stolen telegram! Antonio, the messenger boy, is dead and scalped! He was even stripped naked! Old Duval believed me only intriguing for my profit! And now, I will keep Lischen and

Laure both ignorant of the murder! Laure Duvernay is in my power! She knows nothing damaging to me, and she has, at least, robbed Sir Aubrey, if not hastened his death! As for the Baronetcy, I will let that hunt me up! Julian's solicitors and the Hawtrey family lawyers can find me later! The succession is safe now! Then there is Ambroise Larue and *la belle* Judith! After a polite *visite incognito*, to Combermere, the great Sheffield millionaire can certify that my dead brother took me out to America, as Monsieur de Mont Brun, for his own profit, a contrivance devised only to foil speculators and frontier prospectors! *Voilà une victoire!*"

And then, he gave himself up to a wildly gloating joy over the easy accomplishment of his life revenge!

"And, not a single smile shall show my glee! Even old Achille Duprat is to be kept in the dark!"

He had accustomed himself to softly repeating, "Sir Raoul Hawtrey, Marquis de Verneuil!" long before he rejoined the aged Frenchman and his hypocritical fellow-traveler at Trinidad.

"Wait, only wait, till we leave New Orleans!" said Raoul, softly, as he caught the flush of the woman's burning eyes, under her somber black veil. "We will go on, via Chicago, on a honeymoon trip to New York! No one knows us! *Va bane!* Only wait!"

And, the happy mourners grinned in their horrid glee, as the happy widow demurely dropped her eyes, and rejoined the watchmaker.

With a watchful craft, Raoul had bewildered old Duval with many commissions, when they parted at New Orleans.

The gift of a thousand dollars enabled the old fellow to replenish his paltry stock, and also to have a glimpse of the faded glories of the French Quarter.

"You shall have every one of your orders fulfilled! You will have every interest watched for, and, you will some day return to our mountains!" the grateful old dupe cried.

"Remember! Send all to the care of Achille Duprat, No. 5 Rue Paradis, Paris," said Raoul, and the old man tapped his notebook in reply.

"*Parfaitement compris!*" he said, as he took a seriously sympathetic adieu of the sighing widow.

Half an hour later, Monsieur and Madame Leroy were laughing over their champagne in a private compartment of the train, sweeping on toward Chicago.

No more loverlike couple ever descended at the Hotel Vautrain, in West Twenty-third Street, New York City, than the vivacious Leroy (by rumor), an immensely wealthy French couple from San Francisco.

Madame Leroy was now arrayed *en grand dame*, and the February breeze had only brightened the roses on her blooming cheeks.

The trappings and habiliments of woe had all been cast away forever at Chicago, where many a "lightning change" act occurs, in these later days of love and lucre.

But, the sedate "Monsieur de Mont Brun" also had a single apartment of his own at the Astor House, where he was registered alone, and there, he spent his days in carefully going over all the correspondence and telegrams now gathered up from the French Consulate-General and the two Companies' offices.

While his days were given up to the serious business at hand, Raoul at night dashed madly into every pleasure now opened to the liberal purse, with Lischen Heffner at his side.

For, the reckless woman now knew of the unquestioning welcome which awaited her in Mülhausen, only provided that she came not home empty-handed.

Old Achille Duprat had forwarded the letters, in which an ingenious euphemism had covered all her eccentric past. Raoul delighted in the woman's pleasure-loving company.

Long years of brutal neglect had erased every spark of womanly feeling, save her undying maternal affection for the one child whose baby smile she had known.

The murderer blessed this guilty alliance, this *amourette de voyage*, for, in every gay and glittering scene, with wine and Lischen's wits, he forgot that lonely grave in the Painted Mountains, and heard no

more the sorrowful wail of the mountain pines!

When the newly made Baronet had read all Laure Duvernay's historiettes of the demise of Sir Aubrey Hawtrey, he smiled grimly.

"I will leave the affair between them! Richepin and Madame la Comtesse have a common bond of secrecy now! *Allons! C'était très bien fait!*"

The long wrangle over Doctor Richepin's enormous accounts and expenses, the astonishment at the dying Baronet's written disposition of all the furniture of the villa at Fontainebleu, the transfer to Laure of the paid-up lease for two years, and the gift of all his personal jewels and movables in France to Madame la Comtesse Laure Duvernay—all these things had vastly diverted the late Baronet's solicitors.

And, both the Doctor and "the faithful guardian," Laure Duvernay, easily obtained both the sympathy and the favorable decision of the French authorities, eager to shear the stranger!

It was left for the *Directeur des Pompes Funèbres* to roll up an account for the stately funeral, which made the teeth of the First Secretary of the English Legation rattle in holy horror!

There was one other Gallic tribute to be extorted from the dead patrician.

The removal of the Baronet's remains to the family mausoleum at Combermere was the last chance for a slice of the foreigner's British gold!

"I suppose that they will deny it over there, also!" sullenly said Raoul, as he laid the letter finally away.

The "it" so coldly phrased, was that body lying out there under the faraway pines of New Mexico!

"I must prevent this being removed for a year or so!" mused the new Copper King, as he carefully indited a cablegram to the waiting woman who was as yet all ignorant of the tragedy of Bear Valley:

"Coming, by England, to Paris. Home in a month. May return here."

"That tells her nothing! And, she can hear the news when I arrive!" grimly decided Raoul, with a sudden self-protective shudder! He feared to face those glittering eyes which read every secret of his heart so easily.

“She can never know that I was present when—*when he died!*” used Raoul. “And she must never know!”

The fool, Fortune’s puppet of the moment, never knew of the details of Sir Aubrey Hawtrey’s last illness! And, in fact, none of her chosen friends ever learned from Madame Duvernay of the sealed envelope found under Sir Aubrey’s pillow.

It contained the key of his traveling *cabinet de toilette*.

Scrawled in the voluptuary’s own hand, were the words: “You will find your diamond necklace money there—a hundred thousand francs. I had hoped to clasp it on your neck! Take it, and welcome!”

The dying cynic had chuckled as he thought, “It’s a barefaced robbery of that damned business snob, Julian! If I could blow up Combermere, I would crawl over there on my hands and knees, to do it! He’s a cad—and a bubble promoter!”

Which legacy of love, was never wafted over the ocean to the man who was, for two weeks, a Baronet and the lord of fair Combermere.

With a crafty thriftiness, Laure Duvernay had called her drudging sister to be the watchdog of the Villa Duvernay, when she was secure in her easily gotten succession.

“I will await Raoul’s return here,” the pretty *ci-devant* widow mused, before her charming foyer. “And if he comes not, then——”

It was easy to see that it would be “not Lancelot, but another!”

For, Madame la Comtesse was now *bien lancée!*

The mysterious *éclat* of her dashing campaign had surrounded her pretty head with an aureole of the Venus Anyadomene.

And so, untrue to each other, even in sin, the parted lovers awaited a reunion, while Monsieur le Docteur Richepin chased the charming solitude of the pretty enchantress.

But, with his keen mind diligently set to the task, Raoul Hawtrey studied over the latest dispatches of Bremond, addressed jointly to Julian Hawtrey and himself.

"I must be ready for the coming of this Ralph Evans!" mused the new Copper King. "A Welshman, a great smelter of ores, the second superintendent at Sheffield, and an agent bearing full powers. He must not suspect the existence of Madame Leroy! A word from him to Judith Larue, and then, good-by to my golden future!"

And soon, the brief, stern words of old Ambroise Larue's cablegram rang out like a bugle call:

"Come here at once. Hold Evans at New York. Telegraph Ross to keep in charge. Will send Evans final orders on your arrival. Answer date of your sailing. Will meet you at Liverpool!"

"So, he is deeply interested!" cried Raoul. "Now, my millionaire partner, as Julian's heir, I can meet you at last on equal terms! For, I have his name, his fortune, his mine, and I will have his chosen bride!"

There were but three days left for rapid work!

And then, closing up all his business at the French Consulate, telegraphing his orders out to Ross, Monsieur Leroy engaged a first-class passage on the "Bourgogne" for Mrs. Lischen Heffner, in her own name.

The handsome scoundrel unwound Lischen's arms from his neck, the next day, as she sobbed in her pretty cabin.

"No tears!" he passionately murmured. "Here is what I promised you! With this twenty-five thousand francs, you will be a queen in Mülhausen! No awkward questions will be asked! The way is made smooth! Weave your own fairy tale! It will be believed, I assure you!" he laughed. "And keep this money in your own hands, out of your old husband's reach!"

"Trust to me!" the woman said, fiercely. "And you?"

"I will delay two weeks in England. Within a month I shall call on the old priest, and send for you! After that, our course is plain sailing! Here is five hundred francs pin money, for the voyage!"

Standing on the dock, Raoul mused as he watched her receding form.

"Fine feathers make fine birds! She is the equal of any of them—the light-heeled sisters! And, I may need her yet!"

He leaped into his carriage and drove back to the Astor House gayly.

"After all, what is a thousand pounds, to a man *with twenty thousand a year*? I have got rid of her easily! She knows nothing, and, she would die for me!"

It was even so! The only one who had crossed his path to love him was the storm-tossed woman, bound to a place of shelter, full-handed, and with the secret of her shame locked in her heart!

For, her child now eagerly awaited her!

And, Lischen Heffner raised her hands in a sudden vow:

"The girl shall never know!"

When Raoul Hawtrey returned to the Astor House he was strangely light at heart!

Always fairly abstemious, following the guarded prudence of the Frenchman, who measures out his dissipations, *jusqu' à la dernier gout*, Raoul had lately indulged freely in wine, under the guidance of the pleasure-loving widow.

"I have not betrayed myself, so far!" mused Raoul. "Thank Heaven, in a month I can hedge myself with the dignity of Sir Raoul Hawtrey, a mourner *à la mode*!"

He had dropped "Monsieur Leroy" forever! And so, the little cozy French hotel on Twenty-third Street mourned for their "star boarders."

"Curious metamorphosis of womanhood!" thought Raoul, lying at ease in his rooms. "I found her a mere sad-eyed, spiritless drudge! And now!" he laughed, "wine and pleasure, dress and money, freedom and her own unbridled deviltry, have brought back the snap to her eyes and the lazy voluptuousity to her tiger nature! And why not? Formed for man's pleasure after all, woman's only *métier*! She will hoodwink her gruff, old husband, and lead him a gay dance! But, she really loves her child! Now, for a last month's masquerade as 'Monsieur de Mont Brun!' Thank Heaven, old Larue is a tower of re-

spectability! He will certify to the business reasons for which I assumed the name, dictated by the prudence of my wealthy employers! *No! I can now defy the very devil himself!*"

And yet, the murderer's heart beat strangely when a ringing knock brought him to his feet!

There was the telegraphed announcement of the arrival of the "Oceanic" at Quarantine!

"Good!" cried the happy Copper King. "One day with Ralph Evans, and then, out on the ocean, I am free from all possible suspicion, and can snap my fingers at any inquiry! For, Ambroise Larue will defend his easily gotten millions!"

"There are two gentlemen below, who will give no names, but desire to see you on the most important business!" said the lingering callboy.

"Very good! I will go down!" gravely remarked Monsieur Mont Brun.

Since leaving New Orleans, Raoul had dropped unconcernedly into his easy English. There was no further need of any linguistic concealment.

And yet, Raoul Hawtrey was armed at all points as he bowed to two serious-looking men of affairs.

In a secluded corner of the writing-room, Raoul calmly said:

"At your service, gentlemen!"

The one, was a middle-aged person of a legal aspect, the other, quite plainly showed the medical man in his semi-paternal manner.

"We represent the Lancashire Life Insurance Company," said the lawyer, presenting two neatly engraved cards. "You may or may not know, Monsieur Mont Brun, that the late Sir Julian Hawtrey's life was insured for a very large sum, in our New York office!"

And now, the Frenchman's brain was working like lightning as he cast up his first line of defense.

"Pardon!" he blandly remarked. "My relations with the gentleman were simply those of a scientific expert! I joined Monsieur Bremond and himself here, after their stay of three weeks in New York City, and I am totally ignorant of all the private affairs of my employer!"

"Precisely!" purred Doctor Lomax, as he gazed at Lawyer Endicott. "Naturally you would not be interested as a beneficiary, but, one hundred thousand dollars is a very large sum! It is true that Monsieur Bremond was the agent in taking out the policies to the benefit of Ambroise Larue, Esquire, of Sheffield. Now, we have cabled over to Bremond, who refers us to *you* for all the particulars of the death!"

Raoul Hawtrey's blood coursed back to his startled heart!

"I can give you a newspaper, the 'Caliente Journal,' of New Mexico, with the fullest public accounts of the Indian raid, in which the lamented gentleman lost his life," said Raoul, with extreme politeness. "Further than that, I should decline to discuss the affair without explicit orders from Mr. Larue, now my principal, in all my professional work! Mr. Larue's agent, Ralph Evans, arrives here to-night, on the 'Oceanic.' He is going out to take full charge! You might see him!"

"He would know nothing of this strangely sudden death, *coming from England!*" snapped the lawyer.

Mr. Philip Endicott was visibly disgruntled.

"Certainly not!" suavely answered Raoul, rising. "But, he could authorize me to confer with you! Otherwise, I shall be obliged to await Mr. Larue's orders! He is a man of the most extreme business caution!"

"Precisely!" purred the Doctor. "I have no doubt that Mr. Evans will oblige us! You see, we have no proof of the death, only a mere surmise! We received a cablegram of a death claim from Mr. Larue."

"I presume that the matter will be duly adjusted through the home office," said Raoul. "I will go and bring you the journal."

Fifteen minutes later, the excited Frenchman bowed his visitors out.

"Of course, Monsieur Mont Brun," said the lawyer, "you know that if you refuse to give us full details, we will go out and make an *ex parte* investigation, as to the cause of death, and, we are entitled by our

local laws, to verify the corpse, as being truly that of the late Baronet!"

"Whatever Mr. Larue authorizes I will cheerfully do to aid you!" said Raoul. "And, Mr. Evans will be here to-morrow, in conference with me! I will refer it all to him!"

When the two Americans watched Raoul Hawtrey quietly leave the room, the lawyer whispered:

"There is something furtive about that fellow! We will look more closely into this! It is a rough trip in winter, out into the wild mountains of New Mexico; but, I presume, that a thorough investigation will be made! I shall insist upon a very searching one!" said Endicott, as they walked down to their cab.

For hours, Raoul pondered upon this disturbing visit.

"Bah!" he cried, finally, in the reaction of his active intellect. "They will hear no accusing cry from their dead witness! The revolver did its work too well! But, they mean to be ugly, and delay the payment! I will let Evans handle them! It's no affair of mine!"

Before midnight, the burly Welshman was closeted with Raoul, and it was in the wee, sma' hours, before they had canvassed every point of the situation.

"I've already cabled my arrival!" said Ralph Evans, a sturdy man of fifty-five. "I'm glad you're off on the 'Lucania.' You will reach Sheffield in time to cable me full instructions out to Caliente. Bremond and Mr. Larue are eager to hear every detail of the shocking tragedy from you! There is no danger of an Indian attack now, I suppose!"

"Not a whit!" answered Raoul. "A battalion of troops, two hundred employees, and three thousand railway laborers are within five miles. Moreover, a regiment has been rushed in to surround the Jicarilla Apache Reservation, and so, apprehend the returning raiders, who are being hunted down like wolves!"

"Very good!" said Evans. "As for these insurance people, I will tell them I will cable to Larue for orders! Leave all to me! While they wait, you will have sailed, and then, Larue will direct you himself!"

Before another sunset, Raoul Hawtrey was on the "Lucania," which sailed at early daybreak! He

laughed at the discomfiture of the insurance investigators, and then, shook hands warmly in adieu to Evans.

"So you have telegraphed out to Ross! Good! You will find 'Texas Dave' a man, every inch of him! Bremond seems to have left little for me to tell you! There has been nothing drawn from the two credit banks here since Sir Julian's death. Saunders has all the cattle accounts in shape! Dave Ross has the papers and property of Sir Julian, and the mine accounts are in good order! Young Hazard, there, is an excellent bookkeeper! As for the mine, it is a non-pareil!"

"So it seems!" heartily cried Evans. "And, before a year is out, I'll have it making splendid returns! Bremond and Larue are already overseeing the finest plant ever put up in America! The 'Governor' has gone in for high stakes here! But, if the five hundred tons works up to Bremond's own sample assays, no one needs any more money than it will produce—and, as you said, almost runs itself!"

Left alone, Raoul threw himself into his bed, with a delightful sense of release! He knew from his brief cablegram that Larue approved his caution now, and, when he awoke, the swift 'Lucania' was churning the sea foam high, as she dashed over the freshening waves.

While the stout vessel buffeted the March gales, fighting her way back to England, Monsieur Mont Brun preserved a grave and unruffled demeanor.

Seated in the smoking-room, busied with rolling his Syrian cigarette, the dark-eyed Frenchman pondered long over the coming meeting with Laure Duvernay.

There was a plan which, but for her, would afford him the period of polite eclipse which he desired. He well knew that Laure and Doctor Richepin would strip the defunct Sir Aubrey of any portable property taken to France!

"There's one thing," he growled; "the English laws are severe, but just. The whole estate will be safely tied up, waiting for me! If it were not for Laure Duvernay, I would close matters with Larue,

go over to France, and hide myself at San Félicien for a while. Lischen Heffner is very good company! She could steal away on pretense of closing up her American affairs, and keep me company down there! She is quick-witted, devoted, and may be useful! But how will Laure take my succession? She may clamor for a reward, or—a marriage!”

Coldly forgetting the way that the door of Death had been opened for the honors now awaiting him, Raoul Hawtrey said: “Never!”

It was not lassitude, it was not satiety, it was not a scorn of Laure’s shadowy past!

“Bah! *Les aristocrates sont toutes coquettes, et pire,*” he muttered.

It was fear, a groveling fear, lest the quick-witted adventuress should surprise his ghastly secrets!

“I must leave all to Fate!” at last decided the tortured man. “I may be able to frighten her away to Constantinople, but, with Larue, I dare take no chances! And, I must soon face these Cattle Company stockholders!”

But he, at last, realized the danger of the insurance investigation.

“Ah!” he cried. “If there is any suspicion as to Julian’s death, it will fall first on the stranger who insured his life for such an enormous sum! Old Larue must protect me to collect that money! What was his object in this insurance?”

This and many other perplexing queries were not answered until the “Lucania” dragged her storm-beaten sides up the muddy Mersey.

The first man to meet Raoul at the landing quay was the Sheffield magnate! After ten minutes’ glancing over the stranger’s effects, the customs officers released the newcomer! And then, began the most crucial ordeal of Raoul Hawtrey’s life!

Every pointed query of the old Belgian millionaire was in the nature of a keen cross-examination.

Closeted together, at the Northwestern Hotel in Liverpool, Raoul walked the floor, puffing his cigarette, while Larue made brief notes, or else gazed across the table at the man of millions with a chastened soberness.

They had been several hours together, when Larue sprang up and handed Raoul a copy of the *Morning Post*.

"Read *that* while I go down and send some telegrams!" cried Larue, throwing down his private cipher book.

Raoul Hawtrey was left alone to ponder over two things, for he was disturbed at heart. Ambroise Larue had made no reference to the beautiful Judith, and he had but casually referred to Raoul's prospects!

"You are the next, in succession, I believe?" was the only comment of the man who had eagerly plunged into every detail of the Bear Valley Mine, after scanning the latest newspaper account of Sir Julian's death at the hands of the "bloody Apaches!"

"I wonder if he thinks me an illegitimate son!" mused Raoul, the fierce pride of rank and lust of wealth burning in his veins.

The fashionable journal's article referred distantly to the succession of the late Sir Julian Hawtrey, of Combermere.

"It is believed, though the family solicitors are still silent, that the title and estates must devolve upon a younger brother, Sir Raoul, of whose early career the most romantic stories are told. Educated, for some reason, at the École Polytechnique, at Paris, the young engineer has been a wide traveler, and spent many years in Spain, Russia, and Asia Minor! His present whereabouts are unknown, though the valet of the deceased Sir Julian states that the brothers met on Lord Avonmore's yacht, 'Dreadnaught,' last year, in Constantinople. Combermere is one of the finest old places in Wessexshire, the rent-roll being a tidy twenty thousand a year, and the personality of the two deceased holders of the title being very large, both dying unmarried."

When Larue returned, he said, briefly:

"Tell me all of the insurance matter in New York!"

When Raoul had finished, Larue said:

"It is strange that some fancy pursued me to insure my preliminary outlay on Sir Julian's life! I

have sent all directions needed to Evans, who will go on at once and take charge."

"In all this," said Raoul, when he had finished divulging the plans of Don Andrès Armijo, and "Texas Dave's" reasonable offer, "you must advise me! I need some time for my family affairs!"

Ambroise Larue studied long and deeply!

"I have it!" he said. "Go down to London and close up all your representative matters with that Cattle Company, and get out of it! Let them appoint 'Texas Dave' as manager *ad interim*. Give no details of Sir Julian's death beyond the journalistic account. They need not know that you were present at the time!"

Raoul's heart leaped up.

"The old miser wants his insurance money! I have him!"

"Then," said Larue, looking him full in the face, "go quietly over to Paris! Keep out of the way! Drop the Raoul de Mont Brun the moment you arrive in France! You are to avoid Soames, Sir Julian's valet! Keep away from his lawyers, the family lawyers, and his chambers, as well as Combermere. Possess yourself of all the proofs of your legitimacy, correspond quietly with the old family solicitors! Then they will ask you to London! Come over, openly, as Sir Raoul Hawtrey—and—come to us at Sheffield! Neither his lawyer nor the family solicitor need know of your American tour! Simply say nothing! For you are not only, the heir of Sir Aubrey, but, our relations in the Bear Valley Copper Mine are now vastly changed! To control 'Texas Dave' and Don Andrès Armijo, I must handle our joint interests, as a unit!"

"Ah!" mused Raoul, studying the inscrutable face before him. "He will venture nothing till he is sure of my legitimacy! That dead cur has probably blasted my poor mother's memory!"

And, a fierce thrill of pride in his bloody deed, now surged through Raoul's veins!

"This, you see," kindly said Ambroise Larue, with a marked change of tone, "will enable me to complete a plan for merging the two mines together, and leave

you and I in absolute control of the whole enterprise. I will be ready when you return!"

"I shall not be long absent," calmly answered Raoul. "All my own legitimation papers are in the Banque de France, and Sir Julian and myself last year, divided a small inheritance, left in trust by our father, in my mother's hands. It was lying in the Credit Lyonnais, and he, both there and in the British Embassy, acknowledged formally our relation, and we exchanged three sets of clear receipts—one, filed in the Embassy, one, with Notary Achille Duprat, No. 5 Rue Paradis, and another, left with the Credit Lyonnais."

A cunning smile stole over Ambroise Larue's face!

"Then, your legal position is invincible! You must come at once, on your arrival at London, to us, as Sir Raoul Hawtrey! Let the family solicitors send their best man up to Sheffield! You are young, foreign-bred, ignorant of the English laws! You will be my guest, and my solicitors will watch over both successions for you! If you need bonds or sureties, I can furnish all! But, do not linger openly in London! Come to us, and make 'The Priory' your home!"

"And, I shall not stop going down?" said Raoul, with some emotion.

"Don't you see I wish you to clear off the Cattle Company affair first, as 'Monsieur de Mont Brun'? Telegraph now your arrival to the Chairman. When you come back here, we will telegraph for 'Texas Dave' to come on with Don Andr s Armijo's power of attorney. All that property in America is outside of the English probate laws. And, I can erect the two properties into the 'Cienfuegos Copper Company, Limited!' You own stock in both, and Sir Julian's can be issued to you by me, direct, in your own name, and, as we will own all the stock, we are exempt from any ugly inspection! 'Texas Dave' must not know of your being Sir Raoul Hawtrey, till I have closed all the contracts with him and Armijo!"

"Where shall I hide?" cried the happy Sir Raoul, seeing the great shield and buckler raised up over him, the defense of Ambroise Larue's avarice.

"At Combermere! I know the old place well!"

said Ambroise Larue. "Madame De Vrees, Judith, and myself can go down with you! They can remain on a visit! I will keep 'Texas Dave' busied, until the papers are ready for his signature! You can give me your power of attorney as Raoul de Mont Brun to take and receipt for your stock! Then it will be issued in your name!"

"You are a genius!" cried Sir Raoul Hawtrey, who understood the hidden compact of a "perpetual offensive and defensive alliance."

As the midnight train whirled by Sheffield, the old millionaire disappeared with one last injunction:

"You come back to us as to your first home in England!"

Before the next afternoon, Sir Raoul Hawtrey had closed his business with the President and the Executive Committee of the New Mexico Cattle and Sheep Company, and the telegraphed authority to "Texas Dave" had been duly forwarded.

"Wait!" was the crafty Baronet's parting injunction. "He will be here in two months! Let him aid you in selecting your permanent manager! He will bring all Don Andrès Armijo's counsels to guide you!"

And then, profusely thankful, "Monsieur de Mont Brun" stole away on the tidal train for Boulogne.

He had not been "marked down" in London, and he was happy, radiant, triumphant, as he hid himself the next evening in a small German hotel near the Gare Saint Lazare.

Only the old Notary Achille Duprat shared the happy home-coming of the undetected murderer.

With a new lease of cunning, he concealed his risen fortunes from Duprat! "I trust no one now!" he murmured, conscious of the burden of the undetected murder.

There was a packet of waiting letters from Lischen Heffner, which brought the glow of passion to his cheek!

When he had dispatched his telegrams to the solicitors of the Hawtrey family, he wrote a brief letter of notification, signing himself for the first time "Raoul Hawtrey."

The directions to meet him in one week, at "The Priory" were his only guarded communications.

As he poured out the last of the *second* bottle of champagne for old Duprat, Sir Raoul listened with a fine sneer, to the old man's description of Laure Duvernay's gay orgies in the Villa at Fontainebleau.

"There was an Austrian prince, a visitor of state, *en evidence* there!"

"Good!" growled Sir Raoul. "I will have her frightened away! So, *les absens ont toujours tort!*"

He guided the tipsy old notary's hand, as he penned a telegram to Lischen Heffner to meet him at Belfort the next evening, at the Hôtel Croix d'Italie.

"I will surprise her!" laughed Sir Raoul. "Laure has given me my cue! Then, after four days of frolic, back here, get my papers from the Banque de France, and then, off for 'The Priory'!"

A week later, on a clear March afternoon, Sir Raoul Hawtrey stepped from the train at Sheffield. Ambroise Larue met the distinguished visitor, whose valet was a European treasure.

"The solicitors are already here," he said, "Sir Raoul!"

And, at once, he led the handsome cavalier to where, in her carriage, Judith Larue waited to murmur: "Welcome—Sir Raoul!"

BOOK III.

AN UNWILLING JUDGE.

CHAPTER XI.

A MYSTERY OF THE MOUNTAINS—THE TELLTALE
BULLETS—"TEXAS DAVE'S" LONE TRAIL

Fully resolved in his own mind as to his future course, Sir Raoul Hawtrey silently pressed the hands of the imperial beauty at his side. He recognized at once, the public social acknowledgment of the sturdy old Belgian millionaire.

"I must rob you of the opportunity to tell Judith of your exciting adventures," said Larue, "until after there have been a few business words with the waiting solicitors. They are, both sets, now at 'The Priory.'"

The watchful lover bowed and concentrated all his attention upon Larue, who seemed anxious to follow out Ralph Evans's itinerary, at least as far as Coyote.

"Here we are, at last!" briskly said the millionaire, as they drove within the gates of "The Priory."

"Judith!" sharply said the father. "Have the butler see to Sir Raoul's luggage and his valet. He is to have the blue rooms, you know!"

Sir Raoul bowed over the lady's hand, as he recognized the deep deference of the salutation of Madame De Vrees, evidently now aware of the enhanced social rank of her visitor.

"*Autres temps, autres mœurs*," murmured Sir Raoul, as Larue led him into the drawing-room.

"Let me do all the talking," earnestly said Larue. "I will draw you out in the right way!"

Singularly happy at the favorable attitude of his redoubtable partner, Sir Raoul followed Larue into the library.

There was a group of silent men in that formal, awkward waiting which presages all business of moment pecuniarily.

An old and weazened practitioner arose, followed a moment later by a robust and rosy-looking individual.

"Mr. Purvis, of Jarvis, Purvis, & Jarvis, the family solicitors," said Larue, indicating the elder man. "Mr. Addiscombe, of Addiscombe & Son, the solicitors of the late Sir Julian Hawtrey." The florid man of fifty bowed, with a careless nod, as Larue, with a sweep of his hand, finished. "Their clerks—my stenographer!"

Sir Raoul had seated himself quietly at the side of his mentor.

Without a word of comment, he handed to Larue a file of papers. There was an ominous silence as the Belgian cast his eyes rapidly over the formal documents.

The face of Solicitor Purvis was agitated but kindly, whereas Addiscombe's burly air of semi-hostility was unmistakable.

Larue had rapidly listed the documents, and then he broke the awkward silence.

"Sir Raoul Hawtrey," he gravely said, "I regret to say that the personal solicitors of the late Sir Julian are temporarily intervening with the Lancashire Life Insurance Company as to the policy taken out in my favor to cover possible losses on your late brother's business advice. They have sent Sir Julian's valet, Soames, on to New York, to return with the dead Baronet's body, and also, to ascertain certain facts which seem to be as yet doubtful."

Sir Raoul bowed in an expectant silence.

"I shall now, in your interest, exhibit to first the family solicitors, and then to your brother's, all your papers of identity, which are here and in due order."

It was fifteen minutes before the men of the green bags had finished their intense scrutiny.

"I am perfectly satisfied of the gentleman's identity," began Purvis.

"*And, I am not!*" boldly said Addiscombe.

"Why did you send Soames away?" pointedly demanded Ambroise Larue. "He met Sir Raoul Hawtrey in Constantinople, with his late brother."

"I do not admit the death, except on a mere rumor, newspaper slips, and the single statement of this Monsieur de Mont Brun!" defiantly answered Addiscombe. "There is no proof that the deceased Baronet ever recognized this man as his brother!"

"There is the Banque de France, the Credit Lyonnais, the French notary's certificates, as well as the countersignatures of the English Embassy in Paris!"

"Why, then, the name of Mont Brun?" doggedly said Addiscombe.

"Taken to simply shield the use of Raoul Hawtrey as his brother's paid expert in America," frankly said Larue. "My solicitors here, my leading employees, and my family all knew of this!"

Addiscombe threw down the invincible papers with a snarl. *He is a French citizen!*"

"Pardon me!" said Sir Raoul, in a deep voice which made all the listeners start. "I was educated at the *École Polytechnique*, but on a special permission given to my godfather, the Marquis de Verneuil, as a foreigner. And, the name of Mont Brun is mine to use! For our mother was Aglaë Madeleine de Montbrun."

"These facts are strictly correct," croaked the old solicitor Purvis. "And, I know that all friendly relations were absolutely cut off for many years between Sir Everard Hawtrey and the late Colonel Reginald. The younger men were raised as estranged social enemies, the late Sir Aubrey merely tolerating the late Sir Julian, and often questioning me as to the whereabouts of the gentleman before us, supposed then to be in Spain, Russia, or else in the Orient!"

Ambroise Larue's face was bitter with rage, as he said: "And I, now, in the interest of my friend and guest, Sir Raoul Hawtrey, will not allow him to commit himself further."

"Very well!" bluffly said Addiscombe. "We then contest so far the death and the intestacy of Sir

Julian Hawtrey, and so far, rest, on a *prima facie* denial of this gentleman's so-called rights!"

"And as I will back them *with a million pounds and the facts*," coldly said Ambroise Larue, "you will allow me then to offer you refreshments and—*my carriage!*"

There was a kindly gleam in Solicitor Purvis's aged eyes as he hobbled up to the angered Sir Raoul.

"And I, may be allowed to wish you joy on coming into your rightful inheritance! We shall take no such position! Of course, there are vexatious delays and formalities, but as to your rights and identity, there can be no question!"

Sir Raoul bowed his thanks as the obdurate Addiscombe left the room, followed by his clerk.

"Do not mind Addiscombe," piped Mr. Purvis, when Larue had returned. "There are some little Stock Exchange influences which embittered the dead cousins against each other, and, in fact, I fear that Addiscombe is simply obstructing matters needlessly."

"I shall not let him see another paper or a document," resentfully cried Larue. "Now, I shall place my own barristers and solicitors here at Sir Raoul's service, with orders to facilitate all your possible queries! You must talk all these matters over with them, and so, be my guest for a day or so!"

"Very good—very amiable!" croaked the gentle Purvis. "And I can, in due time, enlighten Sir Raoul as to many facts of a very sad family history!"

The subordinates had all left the room, when Sir Raoul spoke quietly: "Let the dead past bury its dead! I have my mother's diary! I never spoke of these matters with my brother Julian. Aubrey was a stranger to me. There is no one who has a right to know save my wife, should I ever take one! I am the inheritor of the whole past! As for this Addiscombe, I shall have no personal dealings with him!"

"Very good, very right!" cried the astonished Purvis. "And, when would you like to go down to Combermere?"

Larue spoke up sharply. "Let the Steward of the Estate be telegraphed for. Sir Raoul, my daughter,

Madame De Vrees, and myself, will go down and spend a couple of days, while you go into matters with my solicitors here."

"Precisely!" said Sir Raoul. "I accept Mr. Larue's guidance, advice, friendship, and hospitality. Before we leave, Mr. Purvis, if there is anything you may wish to know, command me!"

"I think that we will easily understand each other, Sir Raoul," answered the old man. "I know that Sir Everard's and Colonel Hawtrey's private papers were absolutely obliterated, and that Sir Julian and Sir Aubrey knew nothing of the details of the unpleasant family history!"

"No one ever shall open the painful subject!" firmly said Sir Raoul. "When I am inducted into the title and the family estates, when I am duly put in possession of my dead brother's estate (should no will be found), I shall take measures to destroy all the proofs of the past sorrows and brutalities which exiled me from England and made me, a denizen of France, and, a citizen of the world!"

When Ambroise Larue had personally conducted the young aspirant to his splendid guest chambers, he pressed Sir Raoul's hands in glee. "You acted rightly!" said he, joyfully. "It is all a matter of the delayed insurance! You see that Ralph Evans is a sharp one! He has cabled me that these American fellows, Lomax and Endicott, are going out with Soames to investigate! What can they dig up out there?"

"Nothing! This fellow Addiscombe wants to get a fat fee out of adjusting the insurance matter! Bremond's evidence will soon fix him out!"

Larue never noticed Raoul's green and ghastly face as he said: "I will cable my instructions to 'Texas Dave' and Evans to be present at the verification of the body, and to bring on here at least two eyewitnesses of the burial! Of course, no one saw him die?"

Sir Raoul staggered to a window and inhaled the fresh air!

"The body will be the best evidence," he muttered, desperately. "I presume that it will be brought on!"

"Pardon! I should not speak to you of this," said Larue, "but, you have given me a valuable thought! Only in charge of Dave Ross and Soames, shall the body be brought here, and, we will have two eyewitnesses of the burial! If this is to touch your succession and identity, as well as my insurance claim, we will have our own witnesses in charge. I can not understand the ugliness of these American fellows, save on the ground of the heavy loss after the payment of only one year's premiums."

"You are right!" said Sir Raoul, breaking into a hollow laugh. "They'll find him dead, all right enough!"

The startled man thanked God for the rest afforded by his dinner toilet. A horrible thought assailed him! "What if——" There were a dozen grisly suggestions in his mind, as he forced himself to swallow a half-glass of brandy!

But, once in the great dining-hall, while old Walter Purvis prattled of the glories of Combermere with his stern host, Sir Raoul abandoned himself to the charms of Judith's magnificent beauty.

"She will make a superb Marquise de Verneuil!" he mused, as he followed her delicate avoidance of all allusion to the tragedy of the Painted Mountains.

Their light talk wandered over the world of fashion and music, of literature and art, of high life and *le Sport!*

"All this will concern you, more, *now*," she murmured, with a velvety smile; and Sir Raoul gravely met her glance, with the whispered words: "It concerns me only, because it concerns *you!*"

With a throbbing heart, Sir Raoul followed Madame De Vrees into the great drawing-rooms, leaving the two elder men sitting over their wine, when the exquisite voice of Judith rang out over the pearl keys of her Erard.

Bending there above her, the undetected murderer felt the soft invitation of her manner. His position in life was now impregnable! For had he not now Combermere and its rent-roll, his duplicated title, and the "unearned increment" of the Bear Valley Copper Mine to lay at her feet! The resolute attitude

of Ambroise Larue left no ground for suspicion.

"Partners in millions, the husband of his only child never can be torn out of his protecting influence!" so triumphantly decided the man who, with trembling fingers, had sent the shots crashing into a brother's defenseless body!

And in his own heart, he tried to feel that she had nerved his arm to that dreadful work! And yet, cat-like in his thirst for self-protection, Raoul Hawtrey keenly eyed the three inmates of "The Priory." "Their must be no haste, no eagerness for the fruits of victory!" he mentally decided.

And, he was well satisfied with himself, armed at all points, when he bade the glowing vision "Good-night" at the foot of the stair.

"We shall see Combermere, *together!*" demurely said Judith. Raoul knew from the grasp of her hand, from her studied avoidance of the Company's affairs, that this high-spirited woman was her father's only confidant.

"She knows that he must have me, to build up the 'Cienfuegos Company' out of these two properties; that I, *alone*, can make 'Texas Dave' and Armijo his 'slaves of the lamp,' and, she will be the tie that binds!"

With an alluring frankness, he followed Ambroise Larue into the smoking-room, for the wearied Purvis had sought a needed repose.

Seated there, his long Flemish pipe in his hand, Larue opened his heart to the partner of his future mighty plans.

"There's nothing at all to fear!" heartily laughed Larue, while Raoul eyed him from behind the clouds of cigarette smoke, which hid his telltale face. "Ad-discombe is only disgruntled that he loses a splendid client, now that Sir Aubrey's succession passes over to you, directly! Our real concern is with 'Texas Dave' and the wily Mexican capitalist Armijo! But, with you at my side, I can easily control them! Now, you will find old Purvis to be faithful and devoted, as well as the two Jarvis partners. They will come up and spend a week with our representatives here, after Purvis has gone into preliminaries! Certified copies

of the documents are all that he needs, and, perhaps you will let me lock up the originals!"

With a smile, Sir Raoul handed over the packet, and he secretly laughed as Ambroise Larue, kneeling in the library, deposited them in a huge Chubb's safe, built into the massive stone walls!

"If anyone but myself opens that door, it rings a dozen burglar alarms," seriously remarked Larue.

And, hardened now by his absolute conviction of safety, Sir Raoul laughed in his heart to think how his dead enemy had crouched, all unarmed, before him!

It was the triumph of a life, the long-deferred vengeance of a generation! The most trying ordeal of his life had passed with no single element of danger! When Raoul parted with his host, in the wee, sma' hours, he knew every future plan of the acute-minded millionaire.

"I will let him steer the whole matter," mused the happy man, "but, when all is over, I will burn up every vestige of the past life of the Hawtreys!" He smiled at his own superior cunning; he thought of the inviolate steel chests of the Banque de France, of the hoodwinked Lischen and Dave Ross, of the duped old notary Duprat, and of the folly of the gay young Mœnad, the *soi-disant* Comtesse Laure Duvernay.

"Let her laugh with her Austrian Prince! If she crosses my path, I will know how to frighten her!"

The loquacious Purvis had unfolded to Ambroise Larue, all the scandals of Sir Aubrey Hawtrey's life at the Villa in Fontainebleau. "Some picked-up woman companion, this scheming French quack Richepin, and a crowd of underlings—they robbed the poor, broken invalid."

Sir Raoul had begged Ambroise Larue to have the family name saved the expense of the miserable details of vice.

"So with Julian's past!" bitterly said Sir Raoul. "I presume this fellow Soames will rob his dead master's chambers, and I, a stranger to them both, want only my rights!"

Raoul saw, with a secret joy, that old Purvis had habbled, in full, to the host as to the latest host of the embittered Hawtreys!

"It is better so!" he laughed, as he laid himself down to rest. "Shadows will not frighten *me*!"

A week later, Sir Raoul Hawtrey, on the advice of his father-in-law to be, left for a quiet month on the Continent. The two men were in a perfect accord!

"You can see that I have all in my hands!" said Larue. "Ralph Evans is even now at the mine. 'Texas Dave' cables that he has Don Andrès Armijo's full power! They only wait for the formal visit of the prying Yankee doctor and lawyer! Bah! The Company from its head office has already made overtures to me to drop the legal controversy, the very moment that the death is verified by their agents. And, you know the two Jarvises now. All moves on well—you need rest and repose, after all these excitements. Take this month of April, in the Rhineland! Forget Copper! Forget the law's delay! Draw on me for any money that you may need! Let me have your telegraphed address, and, do not give it to anyone else! For, I will meet Dave Ross at Liverpool, and sign the option papers before he can be tampered with by Ad-discombe. To that effect, I have cabled Ralph Evans to let Soames remain at the mine until he packs and brings on every article used by his dead master! 'Texas Dave' will escort the body and bring on two witnesses! Once at New York, I will have him rushed over on an express steamer! In this way we have him alone, and at our mercy! Soames, the valet, will have no favors, and I'll have a detective look up his movements in New York! Trust all to me!"

Sir Raoul jumped eagerly at the suggestion of his princely old host! For, the strain of the intimate relation of guest and host was unceasing! And, the star-eyed Judith?

It was from her royal, alluring presence that he wished to flee! He well knew that the golden bribe of the monopoly of the new Company was necessary to seal the father's consent to the unspoken proposition for an immediate marriage, which Judith Larue had read in her strange lover's eyes.

"I will obey you," said Sir Raoul, "for I can see that there is but one human being on earth who can

handle 'Texas Dave' and Don Andrès Armijo! *It is you!*"

"Certainly!" calmly answered Larue, conscious of his power. "You have a bitter enemy in Addiscombe, the father and son have been cheated out of the fat pickings of Sir Julian's succession and the handling of Combermere! To strike at you, they would aid these Yankee insurance quibblers, investigate Sir Julian's death, and intrigue with 'Texas Dave!' Then, Dave and the Mexican capitalist could balk our every plan! No! *You must disappear!* I will handle Dave Ross and neither set of the solicitors shall ever see him till I have closed all the contracts! I will keep Soames away from him! But, the very moment the papers are signed which bind Armijo and Ross to us, then you must come here and close the final contracts with me! After that, you and I are safe! We will have the finest copper property in the world, and we need this powerful couple of Americans locally to obtain us railway, political, and military favors!"

"There is only one condition which I must impose upon you!" smilingly said Sir Raoul Hawtrey.

"Name it, before Judith, on your return!" meaningly said the millionaire. "She alone knows my every plan, my every heart-throb, and she will have every pound sterling of my money. It is to meet this trust that I have made her 'a man of affairs,' while she is one woman in a million!"

"One in the whole wide world!" said Sir Raoul, "and, I leave all for you to handle! So, I will only speak of her—or to her—when you call me back!"

"Sir Raoul!" said the old man, with happy tears in his eyes, "you are a man fit to rule others, for you can command yourself!"

That April night, under the stars, Sir Raoul parted from the woman who was now his protecting goddess. He was driven to the midnight train, and, following the father's injunction, only said, "I shall speak to you on my return, and then only before your father, as his wish and the sacred obligation of hospitality demands! If I had met you elsewhere you would have known now what you might have guessed at

Combermere! No other woman shall ever walk those halls with me but you, and—Combermere is a woman's kingdom—the realm of a queen!”

“I trust you, all in all, Raoul!” faltered the splendid woman, in a sudden shyness, “for, you have been loyal to my father!”

“Loyal, *en tout!*” whispered the now eager lover, as he kissed her strong and shapely hands!

Speeding along through London, muffled beyond all recognition, Sir Raoul Hawtrey wondered at Ambroise Larue's absorption in the game of mere millions!

“To him, only a higher mountain of gold, to me, this veiled intrigue, is Life itself! For, once that ‘Texas Dave’ is bonded, bounden, silenced, and rushed back, I am impregnable! And yet, can I wait for his return to America? Ross thinks me but a poor minority holder, a man disgusted with the American wilds, and afraid to return! Best that we should not meet, and best, too, that I marry Judith Larue before ‘Texas Dave’ finds out *who* ‘Monsieur Mount Brown’ was!”

The handsome traveler walked the deck of the Dover steamer, in wild glee! “Larue will rush the proceedings! My little condition before I put the capstone on the pyramid of his vast fortune is *a private marriage!* Then, all our interests are one, for blood is thicker than water!”

He groaned at the sudden remembrance of a dark flood welling from the helpless head of the man who had fallen before his bullet, of a blackened tide pouring from the back of the helpless corpse, at whose face he had not dared to gaze!

“Thank God for that Indian raid! It has sealed the door of Julian Hawthorn's tomb!”

As the man for whom the Fates were weaving now with golden threads neared Paris, but one disturbing element forced itself upon his mind. “‘Texas Dave’ might be a stubborn fool to handle, but,” he reflected, “La Comtesse Laure Duvernay would be an avenging fiend if she could foresee my marriage, my possible marriage with Judith!”

His busy familiar devil whispered to him all the

long and dreary railway journey to Paris. It was in vain, that he tried to delude himself, that when the stern old Belgian or the royal beauty who was to be his lifelong protectress would be placated with any stories of "a young man's follies!"

Across his mental vision came back the picture of Judith Larue, as she walked with him through the picture galleries of Combermere!

He saw her again, standing in the great hall, a figure fit to receive an emperor, with the haughty pride of the old Flemish nobles!

In his mind, he saw her seated at the head of the table, in the great oaken dining-hall, the mistress of the superb Elizabethan mansion! No form as regal, no face as fair, had ever looked down upon them as they wandered over the beauties of the past, "all too full in bud, for puritanic stays!"

And, in the state chamber of "My Lady," Judith had answered him when he, forgetting all prudence, had whispered, "All this, is yours!"

She had pressed one slender finger on her rosy lips and whispered, with a glance which thrilled him, "Wait!"

"Not long!" he tenderly said. "This is your realm! The Kingdom waits for its Queen of Roses, for its Queen of Hearts!"

With a flood of sudden emotion, Raoul Hawtrey told her in a tender confidence of the vanished beauty, "La Mystérieuse," the lovely woman for whose hand two brothers had struggled, whose brave, defiant heart one of them had broken.

"The King shall come to his own again! She shall rule here in memory, the guardian angel!" sighed Judith! "How you love her memory! And yet, you see, time has its revenges!"

Struck by his sudden pallor, the noble woman led him out to drink in the rich beauty of the grand old estate!

And, it seemed to the desperate schemer almost like a fairy dream, this shadow-haunted mansion, filled with the spoil of many lands, the riches of the world!

The calm lakes, the grand groves of whispering

oaks, the prim grandeur of the clipped Dutch gardens, the trooping deer, all seemed to be parts of a dream of which Judith was the Cinderella!

"Nothing shall ever demean her! I will not break that princely girl's heart," mused the unhappy traveler. He did not dare to recall the old church where Sir Aubrey now slept in the only peace which he had ever known!

For, there was a vacant niche waiting there for the uncrowned Sir Julian!

And the steward, the old butler, the gamekeepers, the porters and stablemen had babbled of Captain Julian, a star in the days before he "sold out" of the army, quarreled with Sir Aubrey, and became a "business promoter, a stock-jobbing cad!"

Once in Paris, a plan was swiftly formulated.

Seeking out Achille Duprat, Sir Raoul telegraphed for Lischen Heffner to secretly meet him at Lyons! "She can run down by Geneva, and be with me in hiding, at San Felicien!"

The unacknowledged Marquis de Verneuil laughed at the convenient fiction of a distant relative of Lischen's, a "wealthy, eccentric, old woman," who would have nothing to do with the mechanic husband whom she had left!

"Any lie will do!" mused Sir Raoul. "Only, once that lying is begun, it never stops! *Vive la bagatelle!* Let us live and, act the lie!"

In conformity, he filled the old notary's ears with tales about an Italian trip! The faded *bon vivant* drank in the lies and the accompanying champagne! He was all attention when his crafty protégé bade him seek out the pleasure-mad Laure Duvernay, in her villa at Fontainebleau.

"Tell her," ominously said Sir Raoul, "that the solicitors of Sir Aubrey Hawtrey are sending Scotland Yard men over to look up the robbery of his personality! Say that a large amount of money is reported missing! Bid her let Doctor Richepin shift for himself, and that she would do better to clear out, say to Vienna for awhile. Tell her that I am still away—that you know nothing of my whereabouts—that Sir Julian is still in America!"

"And then?" said old Duprat, his glazed eyes fixed on the approaching bottle.

"Telegraph me to the Hôtel General Chanzy, at Lyons, that she has gone away, well frightened! Here is a thousand francs! Do the job well!"

When the old man departed on his mission, Sir Raoul whispered, "Only see herself! Tell her to let you have a private address, and that, after all, she is only finally safe in Constantinople!"

Sir Raoul laughed the next night at Lyons, when he received old Duprat's telegram.

"I saw her depart myself, at midnight, with Prince Furstenberg for Vienna and Ischl! Richepin is alarmed and has gone to Marseilles."

"Brava!" laughed Sir Raoul, little dreaming that his easily invented lie as to the missing money had startled the guilty Queen of Night!

"Those English brutes always keep the numbers of bank notes! But, Furstenberg will take care of me! And Raoul will protect me! He must!"

She had used all her winning arts upon the stolid Duprat in vain, and he was the bearer of her brief note of treacherously worded tenderness!

The Baronet to be calmly awaited the arrival at Lyons of the frankly unscrupulous Lischen!

"She may be of use!" brooded her accomplice. "And, none of them can trace out my nest! For Laure knows nothing of San Félicien! I may send the jolly Lischen over to Ischl, to send this dangerous hawk fluttering away to the Orient. And now for a month of pleasure *en vie de Bohême*, for frankly, Lischen is queen in that uncertain realm—grateful for her relief from the horrors of Coyote station!"

While the victorious murderer wove himself deeper in his fancied web of safety, far away across the Atlantic, the breath of the coming May was sweet in the arched aisles of the Painted Mountains. Some magical touch of energetic enterprise seemed to have enlivened Rio Arriba County.

The presence of Señor Don Andrés Armijo at the Bear Valley Copper Mine did not alone account for the energetic "whip hand" taken by the burly Ralph Evans, now the autocrat of the Painted Mountains!

But, it did explain the hastening of the track-laying of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, so that at "Julian," the new station on the completed road from Amargo, the snort of the iron horse waked the canyons!

The completed telegraph and four-company cavalry camp were a final protection against Indian raids. And now, in the high Sierras of the Atlantic and Pacific Divide, roved hundreds of hardy prospectors, searching for indications of gold, silver, copper, and all which could fill the pocket or inflame speculation.

And, a picket post of a lieutenant and twenty men, scouting to the north and south, easily protected the great properties of what was now vaguely known as "The English Company."

A rigid discipline had been established "on the range" by the veteran Welsh Superintendent, who now passed his evenings in close conferences with "Texas Dave" and Señor Armijo.

The final transfers of the sheep and cattle herds had been at last effected, and Dave Ross eagerly awaited his opportunity to start for Sheffield and London! The memory of the dead Copper King was already perpetuated by the name of the growing town of "Julian," but a few rifle shots from where the dead Baronet's body had been found.

"Texas Dave" and his Mexican fellow-capitalist were both agreed upon the policy of a perfect co-operation with Ambroise Larue, for the wily Armijo had received the fullest private details from London as to the Sheffield magnate, duly vouched for by Rothschild's great bank.

"It seems so strange," fretted Dave Ross, as the three men walked out to view Julian Hawtrey's grave, in the pale moonlight, "that these city chaps can't see that the poor Colonel is dead enough! They'll find him in here, all right enough!"

Superintendent Evans had the "transportation" already waiting at Julian to bring up to Bear Valley the still agnostic Doctor Lomax and Counselor Endicott, of the New York Bar.

Four times a day, stages ran between the new sta-

tion and the mine, whereat the force had been trebled already!

"They will be here by midnight," said Ralph Evans, "for, they come down from Amargo, on a special locomotive!"

"All right!" said Dave. "Squire Maverick will be in here to-morrow morning to certify the proceedings! I'm ready to start for London in six hours after these New York agents have verified the poor gentleman's death!"

"You have done wonders here already, Señor!" said Armijo to Ralph Evans; "your sawmill, stone machinery, your tramway freight, your mill site excavations, your smelting-furnace materials—you will build a city here soon!"

"Texas Dave" laughed. He had a valise full of photographs of the selected sites and the works in execution, tracings of plans, and stores of data to deliver to Ambroise Larue, whose money and energy were now transforming the very face of nature.

"Strange, that poor 'Mr. Mount Brown,' whose good, sound science brought all this in upon us, should be frightened away by a few Indian shadows! He was a dead square scientist, and an awful nice fellow! I'd like to see him again! But, this sudden death seems to have broken him all up!"

"Naturally! It ruined his whole business future!" sadly said Evans, as he turned to the road.

"There they are, now!" was "Texas Dave's" cry, as a covered ambulance swept up the road. "I heard the whistle an hour ago!"

With a grave formality, Ralph Evans stepped forward to receive the two jaded travelers.

"I am the Superintendent in charge," said Evans. "and as such, I offer you our Company's hospitality." After presenting "Texas Dave" and the unassuming Don Andrès, Evans led the way to his private headquarters.

A blazing fire and a substantial supper awaited the New York strangers, who were abashed when joined at table by a severe-looking man who had been a quiet visitor at the camp for a few days.

"Gentlemen, Mr. Dalrymple, of the New York

Bar, who represents Ambroise Larue and the Bear Valley Company."

Before the tired men sought their rest, Ralph Evans gravely remarked: "By the orders of Mr. Larue, I shall at daybreak be ready to have the body of the late Sir Julian Hawtrey exhumed for your inspection. And when your labors of identification are finished, Mr. David Ross starts forthwith for London with the remains and two eyewitnesses of the funeral! We have all arrangements made; a special car will be attached to your locomotive, bearing the casket. The cadaver has been untouched since the simple frontier funeral. We had it cased in doubled metal cases, roughly made here!"

"We may demand some time for the investigation of the facts!" testily said Philip Endicott.

"Ah! Judge Maverick, Mr. Ross's father-in-law, will join us at daybreak, with certified copies of the Coroner's inquest papers. We have a hundred living witnesses who attended the funeral of their employer; we have a half dozen admitted photographs of the body and full copies of the insurance papers taken over to England by Mr. Henri Bremond, who effected this troublesome insurance."

"How long do you give us?" growled Doctor Lomax.

"The body will leave at noon, under charge of Mr. David Ross, and the two employees who go home to come out with our new forces. You can stay here as long as you wish, gentlemen!" said Ralph Evans. "My duty to you ends, when I have seen you safely over the unopened road to Amargo. These orders, which have been received from Mr. Larue, will be strictly carried out. We are in constant cable communication and, I have already reported your arrival!"

"You will find this a very serious matter!" exclaimed both the visitors.

"To be settled by the law, in London, so I am instructed!" gravely answered Evans, as he called the head steward to show the discontented men their rooms.

It was two hours later, before Counselor Dalrym-

ple had finished his guarded professional colloquies with the slightly hostile visitors.

But, honest "Texas Dave" had early sought his rest, in such wise, that while the darkness still lingered in the canyons, he had galloped down the road, on his old roan lasso horse, to welcome Squire Maverick with a budget of news from that exuberant young matron, Mrs. David Ross, of Caliente.

The forest and valley were ringing with pick, saw, and ax, when Ralph Evans led the aroused visitors to the spot where a dozen brave Mexicans stood now ready to raise out the heavy case, which had been covered with fragments of copper ore, and a pent-house built over the grave!

Squire Maverick, in all the dignity of his silk hat and crooked, golden-headed cane, stood quietly observant, with a frontier doctor, and to the group formed of Dalrymple, Dave Ross, Don Andr  s Armijo, and the Superintendent, these two were added.

Sadly down the hillside, to the assay house the mournful procession moved uncovered, the last tribute to the lost prestige of the dead Copper King.

When all the laborers and artificers had retired, the Superintendent spoke: "Gentlemen, I now offer to you the body of the late Sir Julian Hawtrey, Bart., of Combermere, Wessexshire, for identification, *only!*"

At a word from Counselor Dalrymple, the corral master and two artificers entered! "Here are the private marks placed on the metal cases by us!" said the men, as the corral master stated: "I handled the package in its temporary burial and I find it intact! Here is my private mark, placed here by the orders of Mr. Mont Brun, the Company's engineer, who commanded the defense of our camp."

In ten minutes, the ashen face of Sir Julian Hawtrey was revealed!

There was a chorus of recognition! "My poor friend!" sighed Don Andr  s Armijo. "He is there, sure enough," muttered "Texas Dave" with ashen lips.

After the two doctors were placed in charge, the principals retired for a brief, unseemly wrangle. "We demand a complete uncovering of the body," was the

demand of the New York secret agents, "and a verification of the cause of death!"

When Squire Maverick, with some unexpected dignity, had acted, after hearing all sides, the outer metal case was stripped so as to exhibit the stalwart proportions of the dead traveler and soldier! An unwilling group lingered at the end of the room, while the two surgeons gravely operated together.

At last, Dr. Lomax approached the group, followed by the keen frontier surgeons. "I am willing to admit the identity of the body, and also the proximate cause of death—these two bullets, one entering the head and the other the back, now in the possession of this physician! There is a lance wound also! As to any further matters, I request that the body as soon as possible be resoldered up, in the original double cases, with the ground carbon packing. We will all place seals upon the cases. A list of these may be made in triplicate; we only ask for one! And then, the outer cases can be put on! Should there be poison or any suspicious circumstances, the matter can be taken up at London. We will all seal the outer cases."

"Very good!" said Ralph Evans, "and I suggest that the two doctors, the two lawyers, and the three who go on to Sheffield now, affix their seals!"

Then Squire Maverick said: "Gentlemen, I will offer you, then, under the seal of the County Court, notarial seal, and under your cross-examination, all the evidence that you may desire here, with all the original papers!"

"That is perfectly fair!" replied the New York agents, as the nimble artificers prepared for their work! Ralph Evans silently watched every motion.

"*The bullets!* What shall I do with them?" suddenly asked the frontier surgeon.

"Let Mr. David Ross have them marked by our assayer, then let them be weighed in our finest scales. He can also put a private mark upon them, and the two men who accompany him can do the same! Triplicate copies of this paper, describing weight and the marks can be made!"

The placated enemies bowed an acquiescence as

the doctors rapidly sprang to their work, for the assayer's furnaces were ready with hot irons.

"You seem to have made every preparation!" said Doctor Lomax, in some surprise at the frontier surgeon's professional skill. For, the opened case was being rapidly packed with every possible useful chemical agent of preservation.

"We send a great many bodies, back East!" grimly answered the frontier doctor.

The Superintendent had led the other witnesses away to his office, to begin the semi-legal investigation of the history of the death, when he remarked, "Mr. David Ross and his two companions should be the first examined as he leaves at noon, for Sheffield and London direct!"

"We shall remain some days," soberly said the New Yorkers.

"In that case, I will use your locomotive and the car for this party," said Ralph Evans. With a few brief orders, he set fifty willing pairs of hands at work to hasten "Texas Dave's" departure.

"This fellow Soames, their under-spy, must not find Dave Ross here," mused the acute Welshman!

But, they proceeded with their general inquiry while awaiting "Texas Dave," who was now busied in the assay room.

And there, with only young Professor Müller, the head assayer, to assist him, Dave Ross was marking the fatal bullets which the scientist had chemically cleansed.

"The weight is the same to a grain," curiously remarked Müller. "It does not often occur, but these bullets have been swaged out of hardened lead! They are not cast!"

Suddenly, the Texan uttered an exclamation of surprise.

The little steel star punch refused to work! He glided out like a panther to his own cabin.

Seizing a wrench from his guncase, he twisted two bullets out of the Webley cartridges on his own pistol belt.

"The size! My God!" he murmured. "*The Indians have none of these!*"

He returned to the sleepy young German, dreaming of his far-off *verlobt Fräulein*.

"Weigh these!" the Texan simply said.

"*Hein!* The same to a grain!" cried Müller. But "Texas Dave" had already pocketed them!

"There is a little steel point in each of these bullets, too!" said the assayer!

But, Dave Ross felt the sea roaring in his ears now. "The same weight, the steel points, the same swaged lead! Great God! I had poor Julian's own pistol—and—the *other*— These balls are silent witnesses! This man was murdered! But, by whom? He had my .45-caliber pistol. This is a .60-caliber ball! And only two such pistols ever were made! *The Webleys!* And, Mont Brun! Great God! This is a lone trail!"

He silently marked the flattened bullets and pocketed them.

CHAPTER XII.

SIR RAOUL HAWTREY'S WEDDING—"TEXAS DAVE'S" NEW DIGNITY—A REPRESENTATIVE OF FOREIGN CAPITAL

Three weeks after the departure of Sir Raoul Hawtrey, Ambroise Larue sat alone in his library at "The Priory."

Unrolled before him on a long table, were maps, plans, and sketches.

On a small adjoining stand were piled sheaves of papers, labeled "Bear Valley Copper Co.," "Jarvis, Purvis, & Jarvis," "Walter Addiscombe & Son," and "Lancashire Insurance Co."

It was nine o'clock in the evening, and through the great halls was wafted the confused murmur of the voices of the two sexes, mingled in the murmuring babble of society.

The old Belgian paced the long room with many tiger-chasing trips, swaying his Flemish pipe in serious gestures.

The open doors of his great safe yawned for the

return of the precious exhibits of Mammon scattered around under the watchful master's eye.

"It seems all right!" muttered Larue, hastily running over his file of cable dispatches. "Ralph Evans now has the whole property under a complete control. Soames, traveling slowly, with his railroad freight, can not reach England for three weeks. It was a good idea to confine him to a slow steamer and ordinary freight trains. Now, for Judith! Her guests will soon depart! I must try to meet the incoming 'Aurania' at Queenstown. And, I think that I will have Purvis come up to Liverpool, to take charge of the remains of poor Julian!"

The old man drew aside the rich curtain, and stood watching far below the flaming throats of his score of furnaces, casting abroad lurid red flashes or golden glows of sparkling rain in the mild May evening.

He turned, at last, when a hand was laid lightly on his arm! There was Judith, robed in imperial luxury, his only child, awaiting him! For, "loud on the stones and low on the sands," the last wheels had rattled away!

Drawing her fondly down to a seat beside him, the father closed and softly locked the door.

"I must leave you at midnight," said the millionaire, "to intercept the incoming 'Aurania' at Queenstown. 'Texas Dave,' this strange union of simplicity and native genius, is on that ship! He holds the balance of power, *so far*, in his hands! He must not be reached by those who would thwart my every plan!"

"*I understand, father,*" said the loving woman, laying her hand lightly on his brow. He led her to the window.

"There, Judith," he said, "is the proud work of my lifetime. It represents a vast investment and human skill now applied to adverse conditions. Nature's laws doom our flourishing British mining industries to a final defeat, at the hands of foreign competition. Every year we have to dig lower for ores, coal, fluxes, and materials. Every year, pumping, sinking, and the dead expenses weigh heavier against us! Reduction of profits and the income of manufacturing processes

depend on cheap raw materials and a high skilled labor. Germany's technical instructions are handicapping us in skill. As to the United States, its industries advance by leaps and bounds! They have already wrested the Iron Crown from England! They have also, torn away our Steel Scepter! America is the undrained treasure-house of the world! All this here represents my brain, my will, my guiding power, my whole life. The wise Providence which has given to me ample wealth, has denied to me a son! You have the soul of a man, but yet the heart of a woman! All this huge industrial fabric might melt away under adverse changes, but the two huge mines in the Painted Mountains are inexhaustible sources of wealth! There is a profit beyond calculation in their handling by one united interest! Only by tying up 'Texas Dave' and his backer, Don Andrès Armijo, can I shift the future ownership to Raoul Hawtrey and *myself*! Only by bringing him close to my heart can I, with one signature, secure a natural unearned re-enforcement of wealth which will place you beyond all future vicissitudes. The raw material is safe in America, the processes, plant, and higher direction are here! You have been my companion, friend, my partner, my only confidant, my dearest! But, you are a beautiful woman! You have youth, loveliness, a long life before you! It is in your hands to reach a rank in one of the old families, to be one of the richest woman in England, and, *to be the Lady of Combermere!*"

Judith's face was suffused with sudden blushes and her bosom rose and fell.

"You need at your side to control this huge machinery of blood, brains, brawn, iron, and steel here, a man of both intellect and power! To watch over the vast treasury in the Painted Mountains, an acute, scientific mind is demanded. The two kingdoms must be ruled in unison! Now one man, I can control: the other, the one who literally brings an inexhaustible fortune to our alliance, can only be controlled by you! There is no going back after I have met 'Texas Dave' at Queenstown! It is a battle for millions! Should this once get into the hands of the stock-

jobbers, I would be left powerless! But, with the final control of the two mines, with my patents, with that alliance, nothing can ever shake your fortunes! Sir Raoul has been delicate, loyal, gentlemanly, in his whole attitude! I can not deceive him, even in spirit! *Shall I go or stay?* If I stay, Addiscombe will surely meet Dave Ross at Liverpool, tempt him, try to drag away the Armijo alliance. The second mine would be lost to us, and my control of the first, endangered!"

The old man dropped his head upon his wearied hands. There was both love and ambition, pride of intellect, loyal comradeship, and a woman's fondly pulsing heart in Judith's sweet, low voice, when she whispered:—"Go! Father! *He knows that I love him!* It has been a song without words!"

The agitated father clasped the blushing beauty to his breast! "Don't you see," he whispered, "that your individual heirship, the ownership of my patents and these rights, once gained, makes you the Queen of the Painted Mountains? You have the sole deciding vote in all matters! Listen! I will slip away! No one must know! Bremond alone can pick me up by telegraph! Here is a card with my Queenstown and Liverpool addresses! 'Texas Dave' will think that I came on out of respect to the dead Sir Julian's memory! Bremond and Purvis will meet me at Liverpool! I will telegraph from there to you, 'All right!' If I do, you will know that the papers are already signed—that I will send 'Texas Dave' under Bremond's escort to London—and that I have dispatched to Sir Raoul to come here *incognito!* From here, my child," he fondly said, "you and he can go to Combermere!"

"I understand!" said the agitated woman.

"Then a good-by kiss, my brave girl!" said the overjoyed father. *Off to your beauty sleep, now!* I need nothing!"

He pointed to the packed portmanteau which, with his mackintosh and umbrella, always was ready at hand for a sudden trip, the special objects of Madame De Vrees's care.

Left alone, Ambroise Larue sighed in deep relief.

"Now I am free of usurers, bankers, and money-sharks! This done, I will draw only on Nature's treasury, at my own agency, where my notes can never be protested! And all—all—every stiver will be tied up in Judith's hands! It is the campaign of a whole life!"

On the bright May morning which dawned after Ambroise Larue's departure, thousands of grimy operatives crawled out of their dingy shelters, to serve the hungry machines, and toil for bread and gin, for the few shillings to pay for rags, tithes, and taxes!

But, on the beautiful Yorkshire heights, Judith Larue, a princess of the sleeping heart, wandered about "The Priory," in a strange unrest, murmuring, "Dear old father! How he loves me!"

And so, it was not to Sir Raoul Hawtrey, the dark-eyed cavalier, to whom her heart first went out, but to the grim old man now speeding along over the Irish Channel to Holyhead!

Acute as was Ambroise Larue, he was not the only one now busied with the Copper Kingdom of the Painted Mountains and its unraveled mysteries. Mr. Walter Addiscombe, in his Law Chambers, in London, was chafing over the slow homeward progress of Soames, the valet of the late Sir Julian Hawtrey.

His favorite task of reading and rereading the letters of Doctor Lomax and Lawyer Endicott always ended in a sigh of disgust.

"I must get into the roots of the matter, before I can have old Larue on the hip! Then, if the insurance company would join me, I could make Larue and this French upstart pay well for my silence! They should pay all that I have been balked of by Julian's death! Soames once at Liverpool, and the whole thing in my hands, I can stir up an ugly breeze!"

In vain, Addiscombe had tried to follow the movements of Sir Raoul Hawtrey.

For, Jarvis, Purvis & Jarvis were now frankly hostile, and, backed by Larue's Sheffield solicitors, had established a good-humored *modus vivendi* with the Lancashire Life Insurance Company.

An astute private inquiry office had failed to locate the object of Addiscombe's well-nursed wrath. Even

the old family solicitors of the Hawtrey Estates only vaguely knew that "Sir Raoul was somewhere on the Continent."

There was a very dreamy little French village of Tournon, a few kilometers from the old Château de Verneuil, at San Félicien, where "Monsieur et Madame Le Roy" were the envied of the élite of the simple commune. The handsome husband and the vivacious bourgeoisie beauty wife seemed to be worthy of the "Dunmow Flitch."

For, they frankly enjoyed the modest glories of the old village inn. A well-trussed fowl, a dainty salad, the *bon vin de Bourgogne*, voilà tout!

Driving in the one available *calèche*, they wandered through the picturesque scenery of old Languedoc.

Under the shadow of the Cevennes, the two adventurers laughed over the wild life of the dreary plains of the Coyote cattle range.

In this land of the fig and olive, of the vine, almond, and chestnut, Lischen Heffner gave herself up to a merry and vicious vagabondage with her complaisant lover!

While masquerading again as "Monsieur Le Roy," Raoul Hawtrey, in their secure retreat, gayly laughed over Lischen's description of the welcome which had awaited her when, on her home-coming, she was found to have full hands!

"*Tiens! Ma belle!*" cried Monsieur Le Roy. "There is nothing in this world but gold! It outlasts all things!"

"Love?" queried Lischen, pledging him in the ever-welcome champagne. "Bah! Love is a *folie de cœur*, a charming amusement, *pour passer le temps!*"

And so, in this easy, ill-gotten luxury, Lischen Heffner asked nothing but the enjoyment of the life to which she had been returned from the horrible slavery of the Coyote station.

On pretense of a shot at a partridge, Raoul, master of the woman's every pulse-throb, secretly wandered away, now and then, to inspect his old domain at San Félicien, *incognito*.

He knew, from the guarded communications of old

Duprat, that the woman who had dragged down Sir Aubrey to an early grave was reveling at Ischl.

"Nothing to fear from her!" laughed Raoul.

And, when he received a brief warning telegram from Ambroise Larue, he frankly told Lischen that their runaway vacation was nearing its end!

"You must not go away empty-handed!" he said, "and there will be yet other 'little visits to your aged relatives.'"

Some secretive fear had led him to deceive Lischen as to his *pied à terre* at San Félicien!

"I ask nothing but what you give me!" cried the *debonnaire* beauty, throwing herself into his arms.

"You know you can count upon me to the death!"

And it was true, for when she slipped away to slyly rejoin her dependent circle at Mülhausen, she was the only human soul who had linked herself forever, in good and evil report, to the man who dominated her every instinct!

So, the entirely disappointed Addiscombe was fangless to injure the undetected murderer when Ambroise Larue, hurrying down from Cork to Passage, was slipped on board the great "Aurania," halting a few hours at Queenstown moorings.

"Texas Dave," lounging, sad-eyed, on the steamer's rail, and watching the fleet of little peddling boats, was all unconscious of the raw air and the Irish drizzle.

His face was haggard, and his eyes lit up with some new, strange light. The passengers never annoyed the stern Texan, whose two companions in the second class were known to be escorting the remains of a wealthy Englishman, who had died in the western wilds!

Ross, moodily watching the joyous Celts debarking to touch again the "ould sod," sprang back with a start as Ambroise Larue laid his hand upon the frontiersman's arm.

Larue gravely drew "David Ross, Esq.," aside.

"I came over here to meet you," said the millionaire; "it will save me three days in shipping machinery and sending out orders. Have you the body and the men with you?"

"Texas Dave's" honest face had brightened at his partner's hearty hand grasp, but a strange spasm passed over his face.

"Yes! His body is here, all right enough; the men, too!"

"Come into my cabin!" kindly said Larue. "You are not looking well!"

"I'll be all right," muttered Dave, "when I get this thing off my mind!"

And the honest-souled cowboy silently followed Larue into the great bridal chamber, placed at the millionaire's disposal for the trip over to Liverpool.

"He's a dead square man, this one!" mused "Texas Dave." "Shall I tell him all?"

A rude sentiment of fair play saved every earthly prospect then of Sir Raoul Hawtrey, at that very moment, laughing his last adieux and future promises to the frankly unscrupulous Lischen, under the vine trellises of Tournon.

"No! I'll give the Frenchman a better chance than an Apache, a better show than a thieving coyote!" mused the generous-hearted man. For, the merciful Fates were still spinning only golden threads in the life-web of the man who had taken the brand of Cain to hew his way to Judith Larue's side.

And so, Ross pulled himself together as Ambroise Larue briskly said: "We'll be off in an hour! Have breakfast here with me! Then, you can get out your papers and we can go right into business."

"I'm all ready!" said the Texan. "Don Andrès Armijo came over to New Orleans with me, and the English Consul there has ratified all my special powers and papers! He's anxious to close the whole matter up," dreamily said Ross, "*as he's had another offer!* There's a big excitement over there, and there are five thousand prospectors now in the Painted Mountains!"

"Very good!" calmly answered Larue, who had suddenly turned to a porthole of the splendid deck-cabin, and said, in a random way. "The ship is swinging! We'll be off in a moment!"

The entrance of the stewards, preparing to spread a sumptuous breakfast, took the two men to the outer

deck. They stood side by side, as the great ship glided along out of the beautiful bay. Ambroise Larue's nerve had returned! Those simple words, "He's had another offer!" showed him that one fatal mistake would make his carefully planned Austerlitz, a Leipzig defeat!

"I'll let him go easily into the noose," mused the crafty Belgian. "My God! If Sir Raoul should betray me and join them! The two must not meet! At any hazard, I must stop that," he grimly concluded, "until after I am the master of the whole field! For Judith's sake!" the old man softly added.

And so, he was perfectly forearmed when the Texan in a muffled voice, suddenly said: "Where is Mr. Mont Brun? We can do nothing without him! I oughter get on to London and see the Cattle Company. I counted on getting this business fixed up with you, at Sheffield in one day."

A gasp of relief almost choked the watchful Larue, as he said, calmly: "He has gone abroad for a long rest. He returned broken down with fatigue and excitement. As he only owns a tenth of the Bear Valley Mine, he has given me both his general and special power of attorney, in duplicate. And I had them both verified by the French and American Consul-Generals in London, as well as the English law authorities. So you can take with you the certified duplicate, and I will sign for him!"

"*That's splendid!*" cried the overjoyed Texan. "I can finish all up with you then, at once. One thing, both Don Andrès and I have stipulated to give him out of our first ownership of the north and south extensions an undivided tenth, so you only deal with us on the basis of ninety per cent. of the property! Mont Brun did all our secret work for us! I ought to see him, by and by. I must see him," gravely said "Texas Dave," "*about another little matter!*"

That other little matter was lying stark and stiff in the "Aurania's" hold, conspicuously labeled "Machinery" to outwit the ravenous American express and railway companies.

"I'll find him for you by and by," cheerfully said Larue. "Let us to breakfast now! I intended to

send Mont Brun back with you, but, he's too broken in health! I will send Bremond to act under Ralph Evans's orders!"

"That's a man in a million!" heartily cried "Texas Dave," as he vigorously made a plainsman's breakfast.

With every fiber thrilling with a now burning fever, Ambroise Larue lingered over his fried sole and muffins, his potted meats, English chops and tea, while "Texas Dave" arranged all his papers on a side table, having made a quick hegira to his cabin.

"Now, sir, I am with you!" soberly said Larue.

"Will I be delayed with the dead man at Liverpool?" dubiously asked Ross. "I've got him and the two men that Evans sent!"

"I will relieve you of all," remarked Larue. "The two men can go to Sheffield, inspect the packing of the machinery, and go back with Bremond. I will have the lawyers of the Hawtrey family take Sir Julian's body off your hands at Liverpool! And, you will have nothing whatever to do with them!"

"That's a Godsend!" sighed Dave Ross. "I want to get shut of the whole thing at once. You see," he said, after a momentary pause, "I will have to put in a couple of weeks in London about that Cattle Company. And I want to get home, for," he bashfully said, "there's a little fellow, David Ross, Junior, that I want to get back to."

"I will aid you in every way," quietly said Larue. "Did Armijo give you any lawyer's name in London?"

"Oh! No," simply answered Ross. "If I didn't make the deal with you, just as we've fairly agreed, I was just to go down to Rothschild's Bank and deliver a sealed letter. Then, they would have to handle the whole thing. But, if we sign on these papers I have, which set out the entire business, I was simply to cable him to Albuquerque 'Papers all signed,' and then, leave the mines to you here."

"That is very wise," answered Larue, the word "Rothschild" beating on his brain like a hammer. "I can assist you by sending Bremond down to London with you and one of my Sheffield lawyers. They

will see you through all your whole business with the Cattle and Sheep Company."

"Texas Dave" grasped both his partner's hands in a sudden enthusiasm. "I ought to be able to start for home in say, two weeks," he cried.

"Why, certainly," said Larue. "I shall at once begin to duplicate the exact machinery for the 'Cienfuegos Copper Company, Limited,' and all the papers and stock will be ready. The Cattle people will not delay you long. Where is Soames?"

"Texas Dave's" brow darkened. "He is a crafty, low-minded flunky, that fellow! He will get over here in about three weeks, if he doesn't fool around in New York with that Yankee lawyer and doctor. Look out for that fellow! Evans thinks that he will try to make some trouble for you."

"Nonsense," lightly said Larue. "He only wishes to have his pickings out of his dead master's estate. The insurance company only wait for a few formalities to pay over the money to me."

While the great ship ploughed along, the watchful Larue forgot the lapse of hours. He learned even the minutest detail of the entire past occurrences.

With a visible effort, "Texas Dave" at last unbosomed himself. The frank cowboy was delighted at Ambroise Larue's time-saving device of coming to meet him on the way.

"You see," gravely said Larue, "we can go to the Northwestern Hotel at Liverpool. There is an American Consul there. You have your passport and papers. You have Armijo's full powers. I will telegraph down to Sheffield for Brémont and my lawyer. Our business papers can all be signed there. I will take charge of the men and your sacred trust, Sir Julian's body. You can cable from Liverpool over to Don Andrés, and then go down direct to London, with my two men to help you with the Cattle Company, as to law details and all that!"

"That's a square deal!" emphatically cried Ross. "You have taken a load off my mind, and I will now tell you that Sir Julian did his best to rob us and to rob you, his pardners! He was slyly surveying all the north and south extensions. He intended to enter

this and rob the whole lot of us! But, I had cut in on him! This was all safe long before he came back. And, Don Andrès and I are willing to see you just right in the new property. For we know well Sir Julian wanted to throw the extra property on the London Stock Exchange! That was his little game!"

"Then, he was a scoundrel!" sadly said Larue, realizing how unprotected he had been against Julian Hawtreys's duplicity.

"He forced Mont Brun, the poor fellow whom he could discharge at a moment's notice, to make the secret surveys," said the Texan, as he rose to say "Good-night."

"There is but one thing," said Larue, as he took the Texan's hand. "When you go to London, you are never to mention the Copper Company to a soul. Not one share shall ever reach the public! Avoid every stranger! Trust Bremond and my lawyer. See no one, save in their presence! Then, and only then, you are safe!"

"I promise it!" stoutly said "Texas Dave." "See here, Mr. Larue! You're a millionaire—I was born only a poor ranchboy! You are making me rich and I'll never go back on you, so help me God! Armijo's a Mexican, but, he's a square man, too, and I'll forfeit my head, if he breaks his word!"

The rude frontiersman went to his cabin, and slept the sleep of a child, only murmuring, "When I've done my business, I'll take up the lone trail!"

For, there was a package in his breast pocket, in which reposed the two telltale bullets which seemed, at times, to burn into the honest Texan's breast.

But, Ambroise Larue, the millionaire, passed a sleepless night! He was moody, sullen, and haggard when he stepped ashore at the landing-place.

Dave Ross, busied with the customs officers, never saw Purvis glide away, after whispering to the anxious Larue. "All the rest are ready in the hotel!"

"Wait for me there!" answered Larue, whose fingers trembled with eagerness.

Around the dinner-table in Ambroise Larue's private room that evening, gathered Bremond, Purvis, and Larue's Sheffield solicitor, while the Texan con-

versed in a low tone with Larue at the other end of the table.

Since ten o'clock of the gray, misty morning, a monarch's ransom had changed hands!

Far away at Lyons, Sir Raoul Hawtrey, rolling his Syrian cigarette, watched his valet packing his luggage. "Did you send everything on to Sheffield?" asked Sir Raoul.

"Yes, Monsieur," replied the kneeling man.

"Then, we take the next train!" said his master. For the telegraph had brought the welcome message to "Come at once."

"Now, for *my little condition!*" laughed Sir Raoul. "For, I have nothing to fear now!"

The "little condition" had suddenly clapped her hands with a gasp of delight, when Madame De Vrees handed her the fateful message, "All right."

"I see nothing to keep you now," Larue remarked to "Texas Dave," when Bremond and the lawyer, approaching, said, "We can take the three-forty midnight express and be in London at ten o'clock!"

"All right!" cheerfully said Dave Ross. "I'll go and sleep till three o'clock. I have cabled over to Don Andrès, 'Papers all signed,' " he said to Larue. "I had two copies of the dispatch certified, and here's one for you!"

Drawing Larue into a corner, he said: "Don't forget about Mont Brun."

"Leave it all to Bremond," said Larue. "He will attend to your whole London trip. If you wish any money, he has a chequebook! Simply sign your cheques on my bank, and give him a receipt. He will let you know when I hear from Mont Brun. Remember! Before you go back, you are to come to me at Sheffield for a visit, at my home. I need you two or three days, and, Bremond will go, on to America with you!"

"I'm all done here, then," said Ross. "I will not write! You telegraph to Bremond, and he will answer you!"

Then Bremond, joyously raising his glass, drank to "The Cienfuegos Copper Company, Limited."

For, there was no human power now, which could defeat Ambroise Larue!

"Get me a carriage, pay all the bills, and take me to the station!" said Larue. "Let Purvis drive down with us!"

In an hour, Ambroise Larue was being whirled homeward, leaving the old solicitor, Purvis, to his dreary task of escorting the remains of Sir Julian Hawtrey to a Liverpool receiving vault.

"Let it stay there!" counseled Larue, "until the insurance company waives an investigation. After that, give him the last sad honors at Combermere."

When the train halted at Sheffield, the old man started back in surprise as his own carriage drove up to the station. His butler led him to the opened door, where, as he entered, two loving arms clasped him in a convulsive embrace.

"*Father, is it true?*" cried Judith, as they were left alone. The shaken old man drew her to his breast.

"I have one set of the papers with me, a duplicate set of the transfers is safe in my Liverpool bank vaults. You are the Copper Queen, my girl—and he is on his way! I received his telegram just before leaving Liverpool!"

"And, I have already received one here!" faltered Judith, bursting into happy tears.

"To-morrow night, he will be with us," said the exhausted man. "Give me one day more, then you will be beyond the reach of any stroke of fate!"

As the lights were darkened that night in "The Priory," there was a man restlessly pacing the deck of the Calais steamer.

A D'Orsay in his simple elegance, a conqueror in his mien, a proud, passionate-hearted man, who had won the prize of his life!

"It seems like a dream—a golden dream of the Arabian Nights!" murmured Sir Raoul Hawtrey, a victorious Prince Charming.

He saw before him now, a life crowned with honors, gilded with wealth, and lit with love!

And yet, the grim Fates spinning, ever spinning, began to weave dark and bloody strands into his

web of life—began to break every golden thread—and they grinned over their horrid work!

Sir Raoul Hawtrey's arrival at Sheffield proved to that aristocratic traveler the social caution of his millionaire partner. The butler of "The Priory" was in waiting with a plain private carriage, and an hotel van was in readiness for Sir Raoul's valet and the luggage.

The rubicund butler whispered a few words to the anxious lover which brought a smile to his pale face.

A half an hour later, Sir Raoul entered the great hall of Larue's princely home. Ambroise Larue met him with extended hands.

"You will have the same rooms," he said, gravely. "And, I will wait for you in the drawing-room. Supper will be served as soon as you descend."

With a supreme effort at self-control, the victor in the desperate dash for fortune entered the great drawing-room, after visiting his apartments.

But one sign of welcome awaited him there, a magnificent vase of red roses on the dressing-table.

"Strange, strange!" said the Oriental traveler. "This is her mute welcome, beautiful, yet, on the Bosphorus, the dual sign of Love and Death! I will accept them only as a signal of Love!"

So, when he bowed over the trembling hand of Judith Larue, his veiled answer was the choicest blossom pinned in the lapel of his coat. But, the happy Judith saw the silent signal, and dropped her dreaming eyes.

Madame De Vrees, fluttered in a secret delight, welcomed the traveler, and Solicitor Purvis emerged from a dusky corner, where he had been hidden with Arthur Lymington, the great Sheffield barrister.

"Condition for condition!" mused Sir Raoul, as they passed a gay social hour at the table. Sir Raoul frankly abandoned himself to babble of his travels, and astonished himself as an easy raconteur.

Without, the soft May moon was beaming down on the dingy huddle of never-silent factories.

"These gentlemen are my guests, Sir Raoul," remarked Ambroise Larue, "and they came here only to meet you!"

The schemer saw the significance of the intimation, and, when Judith and Madame De Vrees sought the drawing-room, Larue left the two lawyers to their extra glass of Madeira and led the adventurer into the library.

In five minutes, the catlike Frenchman knew every fact of the wonderful harvest.

"I never met such a man!" said Larue. "'Texas Dave' has frankly trusted to my honor! It was a desperate crisis! Had he reached London, had the Rothschilds heard the babble of this Addiscombe, if Soames had not been delayed, Ross might have drifted into other hands! He is one of Nature's noblemen! I was obliged to conceal your identity and relationship! Now, I feel like hurrying him homeward before Soames can make him aware that 'Mr. Mount Brown' was Julian's brother, and that you are really Sir Raoul Hawtrey!"

"I leave all in your hands! I see the dangers! For the scandals which the life insurance company might have created would have defeated this wonderful operation. And now, I am at your service! What do you wish me to do?"

Ambroise Larue's voice was broken as he vainly tried to appear calm. "I have legally acquired one-half of ninety per cent. of the north and south extension! To treat this vast property as an entirety, I must have your ten per cent. of the new ground. That gives me fifty-five per cent. to their forty-five per cent. I am at your mercy! *What is your price?*"

Sir Raoul Hawtrey's face was immutable. "I will not sell it to you, at any price! But, I will exchange it for one-half the profits of your patent as applied to the north and south extension, upon one condition!"

"And that is?" murmured Larue.

"Your daughter's hand, if she consents! It is no bargain and sale! I give you my whole life, and she is your whole life! We are then one, a trinity of brain and power!"

Ambroise Larue pressed the young man's hands. "It shall be so, if she wishes it!"

"I have left everything in your hands," frankly said

Sir Raoul, smiling. "I understand the presence of Purvis and Solicitor Lymington. I will execute all the papers here to-morrow to protect you in your enormous venture of the 'Cienfuegos Copper Company, Limited.' Marriage is a valuable consideration. Let all be done to-morrow! I will instruct Purvis to make any settlements you and he may agree upon! My complete sale to you of the final controlling interest in the mine to be based upon the contract as to the patent and the future marriage. There is time needed for the legal formalities."

"I can get an archbishop's special license, and bring Judith to Combermere in three days," said the happy father.

"I exact but one thing," said the agitated lover. "That Judith Larue shall know from you that I have mingled no business with my wooing! I shall have Purvis draw my will at once, leaving her, my entire personality. Poor Julian's death has been a sad lesson of life's uncertainty! Now, I am yours! Will you speak to Judith, and then, may I go in and see her?"

"You have acted as the man of honor!" said Larue. "*Wait!*"

In five minutes, the old millionaire returned, and led Raoul to where, in the dainty music room, Judith stood, with softly shining eyes, awaiting her lover.

It was with a strange feeling of awe, a mute appeal of his better nature, that the lover drew her head down upon his breast. "I will never see her suffer!" he swore in his guilty heart.

One day of uninterrupted toil in the great library enabled the men of parchment and waxen seals to place the fate of the vast treasures of the Painted Mountains beyond peradventure.

The departure of Sir Raoul Hawtrey for Combermere was unnoticed by any of the Sheffield gossips. Sir Raoul was accompanied by Ambroise Larue, who sagaciously gave his intended son-in-law his advice. "I will see that this does not reach the newspapers. Remain quietly a few days at Combermere, and then go abroad for a few months! I will give you a royal home-coming! Of course, you can not take legal pos-

session of Combermere till Julian's intestacy is admitted. I will watch over both your interests! And you shall have *carte blanche!*"

"We will go over to Pau!" smilingly said the happy Raoul. "Judith loves the Basses-Pyrenees, and, I know them as a playground."

"You see, Raoul," frankly said Larue, "I do not wish you to meet 'Texas Dave.'"

The fool of Fortune leaned back in an exquisite contentment to see every obstacle swept from his pathway in life.

Purvis had given such orders that in a few hours Ambroise Larue returned to Sheffield. "I have already begun duplicating the machinery, my boy," cried the excited millionaire. "By next spring, both plants will be in full operation. I have just received a telegram of the granting of the special license. Leave all your business to Purvis and Lymington. *Are we not one, in heart and soul, now?*"

Left alone at Combermere, Sir Raoul Hawtrey arranged his own plans. "I will dismiss my too curious valet! Judith shall take her own English maids. I will let Larue give me a couple of his men. No one knows my past! First, by Southampton, to Bordeaux, then to Pau, and, after that, I will fortify myself in the Château de Verneuil. Safe! safe at last! I can defy even Fate! Nothing can touch me now!"

Three days later, Sir Raoul Hawtrey led the stately bride from the altar of the dim old church at Combermere.

There was only Madame De Vrees and the delighted Purvis to congratulate the Lord and Lady of Combermere, besides Ambroise Larue, in whose fatherly eyes shone out the victory of a lifetime.

Walking down the great hall, in an ecstasy, the handsome bridegroom placed his bride in her place of pride.

"All this is your kingdom, my own darling!" he whispered. "As for Life's roses, we will cull them later!"

Though no one knew that the handsome pair who entered a private carriage for Southampton were Lord and Lady of the Manor, yet a sharp-eyed reporter,

notebook in hand, had furtively followed Ambroise Larue and his party from Sheffield.

The immediate return of the millionaire and Madame De Vrees baffled Combermere gossip and the astute Purvis remained to warn the steward and the rector of the parish of their bounden secrecy.

Flinging himself in ardor into the vast projects of the "Cienfuegos Copper Company, Limited," Ambroise Larue laughed over the telegrams received daily from the happy wanderers.

But one ominous shadow now darkened his happiness! A week after the departure of Sir Raoul and Lady Hawtrey, the "Morning Post" contained a long and romantic history of Sir Raoul Hawtrey and his early career. The "maimed rites" of the young millionaire's wedding were referred to, and the tragical death of Sir Julian Hawtrey, cast abroad to the curious.

The same evening, a telegram from his secret agent in Liverpool alarmed Larue.

"This is Addiscombe's dirty work! It means mischief!" cried the angered Larue. "He has been secretly watching us! And Soames, sneaking on by an express steamer, is already in London! The 'Morning Post's' gossip will set ten thousand tongues wagging!"

With quick resolution, Larue dispatched a private agent to London, to give Bremond full instructions to have detectives dog "Texas Dave," and prevent Addiscombe and Soames poisoning his mind!

"What do they mean?" growled the Copper King. "Thank God! *The mine is safe!* Judith is mistress of Combermere, and Lady Hawtrey!"

A thrill of pride animated the old man's rugged heart! "She is happy, in Love's dearest dreams! And, Sir Raoul has been princely in his faith in me—royal in his prevision of willing her all his person-ality!"

With the hand of a Mæcenæ, Sir Raoul had made settlements fit for a princess upon the stately bride.

"If there is trouble, I will go down to London," mused Larue. "As for my runaways, they are hiding in Languedoc! This shall not alarm them!"

Fond, faithful old man! He little knew of Addiscombe's undying enmity! He little dreamed that the special license had attracted the detective's eyes! A telegram to Addiscombe from the Sheffield private inquiry office set two sleuth-hounds on Ambroise Larue's trail.

And so, when the married lovers drove away, they were followed by the eyes of the scoundrel ferrets of society.

All ignorant of the mystery of the Painted Mountains, Ambroise Larue hastened his lawyer's assistant back from London to report as to "Texas Dave's" actual state of mind. Bremond he did not dare to recall, even for a moment.

While the little cloud, no greater than a man's hand, was gathering behind Sir Raoul Hawtrey, that gallant bridegroom had given the enraptured Judith a charming surprise.

"Do you remember, darling," he said, as they sat watching the merry revelers at Pau, "that I told you of my graceful and beloved mother? I have robbed your beloved father of his treasure. I have stolen you, but, only for a little while. I will lead you to my dead mother's quaint old château! You shall walk under the very rose trellises which showered their fragrant leaves down on her graceful head, in dreamy Languedoc, still haunted by its ancient romance. In England you may be Lady Hawtrey, but at San Felicien you are the Marchioness de Verneuil!"

With glistening eyes, filled with a softened tenderness, Judith listened to her husband's strange story. "Let us go there, to this love-hallowed retreat, Monsieur le Marquis!" cried the happy wife. "Why did you not tell me this before?"

"Because, darling," softly said Raoul, "her secret was for you alone! The beautiful old château waits for you, the unravished bride of silence, and there you shall know how she loved me, you shall learn all her sad story, you shall kneel with me at her grave and say, 'Mother! Time has its revenges!' For, all things come around to him who waits!"

And so, hand in hand, the lovers were wandering in these rich June days at the Château Verneuil, when

the triumphant Soames hid himself in Addiscombe's law chambers, at London, to deliver the last letter of Doctor Lomax and Lawyer Endicott.

The burly Addiscombe shouted in triumph, when he had finished the long screeds of the two Yankee emissaries.

"Who are his effects consigned to?" the solicitor asked.

"All sealed, listed, and addressed to you!" was Soames's reply. Addiscombe summed up the secret reports.

"The body was not scalped, nor even robbed; his coat, revolver, and knife found scattered along two hundred yards; the Indians never mounted the hill, but, attacked the lower camp from the east. The body was badly crushed and bruised! It might have been pitched down the rocks! Murdered? In whose interest? Why, that of only one man! This upstart who has just married old Larue's only daughter! 'Texas Dave,' or his brother, killed him, and for his share of the mine! See here, Soames! We must see this man together! You are to keep away from him! I'll put you in charge of my head clerk! He will protect you from old Purvis and those fellows' nonsense! Here is fifty pounds to have a good time! But you are not to leave my man's company! And to-morrow morning I'll have you here to meet this Texan! If he did it, I'll soon find it out! I will see the insurance people," growled Addiscombe, when alone. "They must aid me in this! I wonder if old Larue and this French upstart were really working together! This mysterious marriage of the Yorkshire beauty, wedded like a barmaid, looks ugly!" The angry man scented a rich future plunder.

The whole force of the Cannon Street Hotel now knew the earnest Texan, before whom crowds of happy investors and anxious officials bowed with an affectionate respect.

For, in the extraordinary meetings of the New Mexico Cattle and Sheep Company, the frank-faced cowboy had inspired a general esteem.

In vain did the Texan refuse the offered dignities! He was unanimously voted in as Manager of the

rehabilitated Company for one year, with an Assistant Manager to accompany him and learn the mysteries of the plains.

Don Andrès Armijo, from Albuquerque, by telegraph, had accepted a directorship, and duly qualified by the cash purchase of one hundred thousand dollars' worth of the Company's debentures, paid over through Messrs. Rothschilds' Bank.

The necessary formalities had delayed the Texan, now chafing to return to his chubby infant son, the pride of Caliente.

Guided by Bremond and the watchful lawyer, David Ross, Esq., had acquitted himself with much dignity. In fact, he had left his secret friends but seldom, and yet it happened on the morning after Soames's arrival that when Mr. Addiscombe sought an interview at the Cannon Street hostelry, the Texan had departed for a lonely trip.

"I have some private business of my own," resolutely said Ross, when Bremond offered to accompany him. "I'll be back here at noon!"

And then, a strange figure in a London hansom, "Texas Dave" sought out the gun factories of Web-ley.

None of the smirking clerks suspected the errand of the anxious-faced man, portmanteau in hand, who calmly laid a couple of peculiar looking cartridges down on the counter. "I wish to buy five hundred rounds of this special ammunition," said Ross.

And then, opening his portmanteau, he laid upon the counter the heavy belt weapon with which Raoul had slain his unsuspecting brother.

"They may go gunning after me as a representative of foreign capital!" mused Dave. "Ah! My God! *If I only knew!*" he sighed.

After a half hour conning over old books, a managing clerk said gravely, "We can not make or sell you this special ammunition, without the order of the gentleman for whom we made this pair."

"Was none ever made like it for any one?" eagerly said Ross.

"Never!" confidently said the man. "Caliber .60, steel-tipped slug bullets, swaged lead, double hard-

ened with antimony. No! That pair was made for the very heaviest game—for African use, I suppose. Bring us Captain Julian Hawtrey's written permission!"

"He's dead!" gruffly said Ross.

"Then, his lawyer's!" said the clerk. "We gave a written guaranty to make nothing without his order. He paid for all the tools and dies! There's not a pair of revolvers like those in the whole world! Yes! that's our special mark, and here's the order number!"

"Are those two of the bullets?" said the agitated Ross, laying down the battered fragments taken from Julian's body.

After a few moments' examination with a glass, the expert said: "Yes! There are the steel tips driven in! By melting the two bullets, you will get the tips uninjured. They were specially made!"

A half an hour later, Ross departed sadly, with a certificate sealed by the firm, after the battered lumps had been carefully weighed.

"See Mr. Addiscombe, his lawyer, who drew the guaranty! Let him release us, and we will fill your order," said the polite tradesman. "Here's his address!"

"I'll see him, you bet!" growled Ross.

Suddenly he turned, laying down a ten-pound note. "Make the five hundred rounds and send it to the lawyer! I'll get it from him!"

"Why, certainly!" said the clerk. "There's no objection to that. You shall have it in two days! He can do as he wishes!"

Pocketing his paid bill and the change, "Texas Dave" drove back to his hotel.

"Nothing in the world like the two! Then I must see this man Mont Brun! *I'll not go home till I do!*"

The unchanged frontier simplicity of the man whose incoming wealth had not made him abandon his plain garb, caused the waiting Addiscombe to recognize "Texas Dave," as he wrangled over the fare with his rapacious cabby.

"I must see you alone, and, not in this hotel!"

said Addiscombe, as he glided to Ross's side. "I was Julian Hawtrey's lawyer!"

"By God!" cried Dave, "just the man I wanted to see!"

"Come away quickly, then," said the delighted Addiscombe, and showing the Texan into a four-wheeler, in ten minutes the astonished Ross was face to face with Soames. In a moment, he had written his permission to purchase the special ammunition, as desired, and still, he held his peace.

Made furtive by his devotion to Ambroise Larue's copper syndicate, still remembering Julian Hawtrey's attempt to secretly survey the precious ground, and resolutely agnostic of Soames, "Texas Dave" listened with no interest in the insurance company's squabbles, until Addiscombe brought out, bit by bit, the implications of foul play as to Sir Julian.

While Soames had gathered up all the gossip of the camp, and adroitly followed out the secret instructions of Lomax and Endicott, these two keen officials had resolutely proceeded on the theory that Julian Hawtrey had been lured away and killed that some one should profit by the enormous insurance.

Addiscombe sat watching "Texas Dave's" face narrowly. The frontiersman was as unmoved as a Comanche on sentinel's post, until the lawyer turned to him, and displayed a marked column of the "Morning Post."

"Read that, and you will soon be convinced!" said the burly advocate, smarting under the loss of this long-looked-for fortune, the administration of Combermere.

During the long recital, "Texas Dave" had been led up to a conclusion which overcame him like a flash of lightning. "Julian Hawtrey and Mont Brun had met secretly for long days to effect the surreptitious surveying!" He himself had found in the spring an open ore pit, on the shelf above where Julian's body was found.

"They were often alone together secretly before; why not on this day? Who dug that ore pit? He might have killed him and pitched him over! The boys tell me that the dead man was all mashed up!

But, the horse might have dragged him! I will face Mont Brun or else, never leave Europe! They may have had an angry row! *Who knows?*"

"How would you feel if the company alleges that either *you* or *that man Mont Brun* killed Sir Julian?" suddenly said Addiscombe. He leaped nimbly aside as Ross sprang at him like a tiger.

"*Me?*" he roared, shaking off Soames, who begged and entreated.

"Just read it!" cried Addiscombe, dropping at "Texas Dave's" mercy.

"What's this here man got to do with it?" fiercely said "Texas Dave." "I never saw him!"

"Don't you know that Mont Brun, the man who laid out the mine, is Sir Raoul Hawtrey! The brother of the dead man? And he's just secretly married Larue's only daughter!" cried Addiscombe.

"Texas Dave" gasped and turned to Soames.

"God's truth!" said the valet. "I was with them when they met at Constantinople, and my dead master had this man two weeks in his rooms, when they went back on the last trip!"

"His brother! *His brother!* And so, he gets the mine and the title, and this rich girl, too!" was Ross's astonished utterance.

"Yes!" said the lawyer, "and they've slipped away and are hiding over in France!"

"By God! I've been tricked! I see it all now!" fiercely cried Dave Ross. "You can see the insurance people. This whole thing ought to be investigated! But, I must first find Mont Brun and see him alone! I'll not leave England till I do! Not a word of this to old man Larue! He's my pardner, and a square man!"

Before the excited Texan left, an agreement had been reached. "I'll take a run over to Paris with Soames," said Addiscombe, "and trace the two brothers' history out, from the first. Stay here, at all risks, till I return. I'll give you an address to meet me secretly at night!"

When they were left alone, Addiscombe said: "Soames! This man never killed Julian, but, *he*

knows who did! I'll see the Scotland Yard people and have them both watched!"

Soames eagerly grasped his hand. "Raoul had a handsome woman in Constantinople! She turned up later with Sir Aubrey! I'll find her out!"

"If you do, your fortune is made! I see it all!" cried Addiscombe.

CHAPTER XIII.

LAURE DUVERNAY'S AWAKENING — THE "MORNING POST'S" NUPTIAL ANNOUNCEMENT — "I WILL HAVE MY REVENGE!"

Ambroise Larue was the very busiest man in Sheffield in these pleasant June days, when golden sunlight crept in among the shadows of the gloomy factories.

His rugged heart was at rest, for he felt that he had securely anchored his daughter's happiness.

"No! I have made no mistake! Raoul is an intellect in a thousand; he is superbly trained! His experience is extensive, and, both Bremond and Ralph Evans have confirmed his verdict upon the two mines!"

The Larue works were aflame night and day, turning out the duplicated machinery of the "Bear Valley" to complete the plant of the "Cienfuegos Company."

Seated at ease in his library, the old Belgian, with Lymington, carefully scanned the final issues of the stock of the new Company.

All the shares of "Texas Dave" and Don Andrès Armijo were to be deposited in their own name for safe-keeping in Rothschild's Bank.

"With what loyal faith Raoul has acted!" proudly thought the happy man, as he bundled up the certificates indorsed "Ambroise Larue" and "Raoul Mont Brun."

"These must be indorsed by him to the order of Raoul Hawtrey, and then the harmless *nom de voyage* disappears forever!"

"Ten millions! Ten millions!" sighed the triumphant scientist. "In five years, this mine will turn this out, with no real investment of external capital! And, only four stockholders! I must take Raoul and Judith and visit this copper Golconda! We will have to issue a few trifling certificates to enable three or four men named by the Americans, and three or four by us, to act as Directors! And the trip must be made before the fall! I can see all the heavy machinery in operation, take a peep at America, and then Sir Raoul and Lady Hawtrey can settle down to their county paradise at Combermere. Bremond can make any visits of future inspection! For, I am getting a bit old and rusty in harness!"

He fondly folded up all the final returns of the working of the five hundred tons of the ore.

The output had even exceeded the average assay values!

In the soft summer evening, the old man's mind followed his beloved runaways.

"What a home-coming I will give them! All Yorkshire shall open its hospitable heart, and then, there is the round of Wessexshire!"

Larue gazed tenderly at a picture of his happy truant.

"Life and Love! God bless them in their young days, and guard and guide them!"

Perfectly secure in Raoul Hawtrey's talents, he now wandered in the cloudland of the future to see his gifted son-in-law enter the peerage.

"Why not?" he mused. "Beer, thread, railways, finance, a dozen occupations have led money-princes into the upper house! And my patents, the work of my brains, my great plant here, with the treasure-house of the Painted Mountains, represent every human element of success!"

He ran back the narrow path of hopes and fears over which he had passed to the indisputable control of the Cienfuegos.

"It has been a marvelous campaign! Sir Aubrey's death was, of course, a windfall of Fate, but if Julian had obtained the secret control of the North and South Extension, he would have robbed 'Texas

Dave' and myself! I must meet this Mexican, Don Andrès Armijo! He has a wonderful sweep of brain, tact, and power! Yes! Julian's saturnine greed was the first danger, and the possible meddling of the Rothschilds with 'Texas Dave' as a man in the open market. They would have swallowed me up! I could not cope with the inexhaustible credit of those world-famous financiers!"

And, Ambroise Larue now, knew but one annoyance—the evident ugliness of Addiscombe and the possible gossip and scandal of the returned valet!

"Bah! Kitchen gossip!" sneered Larue, as he reflected upon "Texas Dave's" early departure from England.

From his recalled agent he knew of the completion of Ross's negotiations with the Cattle Company, and that the frontiersman was only awaiting the designation of his Sub-manager to start on his westward journey.

"All is safe now," mused Larue, as he finished his good-night pipe. "I can easily extract any gossip from Ross on his visit! He is as open as the day, and Bremond has him well in hand."

The last minor annoyance of the insurance company's delay was adjusting itself with time. Solicitor Purvis had already smoothed over the formalities, and the sealed case containing the remains of the dead Baronet was already resting in the crypt under the Combermere church.

"I suppose when Addiscombe has examined all poor Julian's belongings, and pumped Soames dry, that he will agree in the intestacy of the unhappy man! What a freak of fortune! Millions in the future, a fortune and a title, all showered upon him, to pass at the touch of a trigger, by a ruthless painted savage!"

Larue was in good humor, for he had sent Lymington away with the olive branch to the Lancashire Insurance Company. "Anything in reason—anything!" And so, the old legal veteran had written to his best client that "nothing seemed to be in the way of an early and amicable adjustment!"

Just as Madame De Vrees handed Larue his sleep-

ing draft, a Flemish compound of mysterious virtues, the butler handed two telegrams to the lonely master of "The Priory." And Ambroise Larue's face darkened as he read Bremond's warning words:

"The Texan has suddenly disappeared. Luggage removed in night. No traces so far. Send instructions. Shall I come up?"

The old man's scowl deepened as he read the second, from his trusted solicitor:

"Company suddenly breaks off all. Demand searching investigation. Addiscombe not in London. Valet has disappeared. Wire me your directions."

"There is treachery somewhere!" roared the enraged millionaire. "*I will grind the whole gang to powder!*"

The messenger was racing away with telegrams to both the lawyer and Bremond to return instantly, when Ambroise Larue reflected upon the one weak joint in his own armor.

"I must keep 'Texas Dave' away from my son-in-law! These busybodies have excited the honest fellow's mind, and he must go home without knowing that Mont Brun and Raoul Hawtrey were one and the same!"

And so, with an eager hand, he sent a letter under private seal, to San Félicien, to warn Sir Raoul personally. He feared to use the telegraph! "Well, well! Counsel comes with the morning!" sighed the sturdy old man. "There is some mystery in this, far beyond my old eyes!"

And while the father slept the untroubled sleep of innocence, there was a keen cabal of enemies plotting to strike him to the very heart! For the crafty disputants saw only in the apparently mysterious death of Sir Julian Hawtrey a plot to rob the dead man of his interest in the mine, instigated and warily conducted by Larue. The heavy insurance was but a mask to the deeper villainy, in the eyes of the men who had succeeded in luring "Texas Dave" out of London! For, Addiscombe's detectives had easily followed the flowery trail of the young lovers, and Larue's defeated men had failed to shadow David Ross in his mysterious, sudden disappearance.

On the morning when Ambroise Larue awoke to a burden of new cares, Addiscombe, Soames, and the now unhappy Texan were breakfasting moodily, in an obscure Parisian hotel upon Montmartre.

"Leave all to me, Mr. Ross," said the burly Addiscombe. "Of course, the first place they will look for us, is in Paris! Now, Soames and I will find this blind trail very quickly! All that you have to do is to remain here with my man Howgate. He knows every corner of Paris. I have often used him as a detective! And, all I ask of you is, that you only go out at night, and," faltered the lawyer, "let Howgate change your appearance a little!"

"Why?" cried "Texas Dave," angrily flushing, and glancing at himself in the glass.

Addiscombe gently indicated the flowing locks, the high boots, the "store coat" of the West, and the *degagée* waistcoat and cowboy tie.

In fact, they were not Poole or Bond Street, and even the eccentrics of the Latin Quarter stared at the stern frontiersman.

"You see, if he dresses you while you are on this trip," the lawyer soothingly said, "our party can not be traced by your garb."

"Fire away!" said Ross. "That's fixed! Now, what do you propose?"

"We have each our part," said the lawyer. "Soames goes one way, I another, and then, we meet and come back to you! After this delay, which is necessary for prudence, say a week, we will put you on your man! Then, when you have had your private interview, you can either join us or else leave us to finish it. In any way, your own good name will not be hazarded!"

"I'd like to see the man who would blacken my name!" said Ross, feeling instinctively for something which did not hang at his side. "Either him or I would go off in a box!"

"This man is no fool, and he has not been made a tool of in this murder, if such there were!" mused Addiscombe, as he drove away to look up Notary Achille Duprat, No. 5 Rue Paradis. "And yet, he knows, or thinks he knows, all or a part of the truth!"

There is but one crafty brain behind all of this—old Larue!”

And, long before Addiscombe had lured Notary Duprat off to a little *déjeuner*, the brisk valet had reached the Gare de Lyon, and was speeding away to Fontainebleau.

Both lawyer and valet were social spies, and yet their points of attack varied, though the medium was the same, jingling French gold!

Addiscombe proposed to attack the brain of the old *bon vivant* through the stomach, even to squandering a couple of hundred francs.

Soames was prepared to drop the glittering *pour boire* into the open palms of the avaricious French domestics of the Villa Duvernay.

Solicitor Addiscombe's extended correspondence with Notary Duprat in the long search for the wandering Raoul Hawtrey had made the two very fair gaugers of each other's character, and the Englishman had rightly divined that Duprat was the depository of many of the wandering engineer's secrets.

“I wonder if this old devil knows of the secret history of Aubrey Hawtrey's quiet wrecking over here?”

And, musing thus, Addiscombe plied all the arts of the host, while dexterously avoiding Raoul Hawtrey's name.

Before the *raffiné* feast was halfway done, Duprat knew of Addiscombe's desire to close up all matters connected with the affairs of the late Sir Julian Hawtrey.

And, it was an easy transition to Sir Aubrey's illness, the scandals of Monsieur le Docteur Richepin's “specialism,” and the quiet orgies of the Villa Duvernay.

Anxious to still further alarm and frighten off the gay adventuress, old Duprat talked freely, and—too much! He only saw in the lawyer's keen questionings a desire to recoup the estate for the missing personal property and pillage of the valetudinarian patrician!

“Dame! I may as well get him out of Paris!” mused Duprat, as he applied himself to the “yellow

seal," and furtively winked at the coming champagne *frappée*.

"The Comtesse Laure Duvernay! *Belle diable!* Yes!" growled Duprat. "She is a risen star in the *demi monde elegant!* Nothing can touch her—she now reigns over Prince Furstenberg, at Vienne, or Ischl, *diable sait ou!* But, *le bon mèdeecin* Richepin! He is, as you know, a specialist! All his fees, his honorariums, are pouched for good! And as to the funeral expenses, all the incidentals, you know, *mon collègue*, decidedly, the French law is against the foreigner!"

While the *vin frappée* did its work, Addiscombe adroitly went over the whole history of the trust which had been closed up for the two brothers Hawtrey.

"There is not a loose string in all that!" said the notary, with pride. "It was all settled through the Credit Lyonnais, and, I had the honor of adjusting all!"

Before the final adjournment to the office for an inspection of *les archives*, the crafty old Frenchman, like Merlin, in the arms of Vivien, had yielded and told exactly what his *cher collègue* desired to know.

Still ignorant of Sir Julian's smoldering designs in taking his unknown brother westward, under an innocently assumed name, Addiscombe saw only a dark compact of murder, implicating Larue and the young bridegroom.

"They squeezed poor Julian dry, and lanced him like a sucked orange," mused Addiscombe, when he promised to revisit his *cher confrère* after the "beaten track" tour of the Rhine and Switzerland.

And, well pleased, he awaited the return of Soames, to whom he had given a rendezvous at a small English sporting hotel, patronized by the jockeys and welshers of old Albion.

With no eye for the beauties of nature, the alert Soames briskly descended at Fontainebleau, after an hour spent in making his plans. With difficulty, the veteran Continental tourist cut off the *valet de place's* harangue, as to the *forêt*, the *Palais*, the *église*, and the *Hôtel de Ville*.

"Look sharp!" he said, twirling a Napoleon; "get

me a *fiacre*! I wish to go to the Villa Duvernay!"

And Soames enjoyed, with a broad grin, the power of money as they rattled on through the broad streets. He deigned not even a glance at the statue of General Damesne, while the *laquais* glibly recounted the *nuits d'été* and *nuits d'hiver* of the beautiful Comtesse Duvernay.

"*Belle comme une ange*, the friend of a great English milord, the *charmante déesse*," etc., all of which was interrupted by their arrival at the secluded villa where Sir Aubrey Hawtrey had yielded up his wretched life.

"A paradise—a paradise!" murmured Soames, a half-hour later, when he pressed a napoleon into the hand of the dashing *garde de chambre*. "Unfortunately, it was not for rent this season! Madame la Comtesse had still another year, at her disposal."

And so, Soames babbled on, while he recognized in the superb picture in the drawing-room the beautiful woman to whose villa in Constantinople he had tracked Raoul by the secret orders of his dead master.

"Yes! It's the very same! And, while she was getting this poor, sick duffer, Sir Aubrey, over the Styx, her lover was dogging my poor master in those damned Western mountains." A sudden desire for revenge seized upon Soames! "They've done me out of a life's profits!" he growled. And then, he jingled a hundred francs in gold before the astonished woman's eyes. "She never lived here alone a year with that death's-head fellow, I'll wager!" he remarked. "La Comtesse had her lover in Paris." The gold was jingling merrily now. "You followed her on her little trips?" The woman's hand was extended greedily. "Tell me all, first," coolly said the cosmopolitan Soames, chucking her under the chin. "I know a little now; I will know more after you have earned this money!"

With an unmoved face, Soames listened to the story of Laure Durvernay's stolen visits to the Hôtel de l'Aigle, at Suresnes; of the circuitous means taken to reach there, and outwit her jealous and querulous lover.

"I hate them both!" passionately said the woman. "The housekeeper is her sister, and she rules us with a rod of iron. I followed her to find out her tricks,"

said the Frenchwoman. "I played sick for a couple of weeks, and I found out where she passed her stolen days. And, her real lover was such a handsome fellow!"

"Is that the man?" suddenly said Soames, producing Raoul's photograph, stolen from his dead master's writing-table.

"The very same! Monsieur Raoul Mont Brun! If you wish to know all, see the head waiter at the Hôtel de l'Aigle. He always served them privately, on the stolen visits! He is a friend of mine!" said the woman, with a guilty blush.

"Can you meet me there, to-night, on any pretext?" said Soames, balancing the coins.

"Yes, yes!" eagerly said the woman. "We only keep order till they come back from Ischl!"

"Then, there's your money!" coolly said Soames, dropping the napoleons into her trembling hand. "I shall hurry there direct, and stay all night at the Hôtel de l'Aigle! Ask for Mr. Edwards! Here are twenty francs for your fare! There will be another fifty waiting you there; but, I wish a picture of this woman—the Duvernay!"

"I'll steal you a dozen!" laughed the woman. "There are hundreds—in every costume—in her *boudoir*!"

"Good! I'm off!" said the victorious Soames. "Bring me one of Prince Furstenberg also!"

"Easy enough!" cried the spying maid. "Go ahead! I will start in half an hour, and be at Suresnes long before you, if you go through Paris!"

While the discontented Soames was being whirled back to Paris, there were dreams of easily gotten plunder in his rapacious mind.

"I will seal this woman's tongue! Old Addiscombe can be content with knowing she is at Ischl with this princely Austrian *attaché*. I may force a good sum out of her. I may get a better price from Sir Raoul Hawtrey—who knows? Or, I may be Addiscombe's trump-card! There's a jolly lot of brass in this for me, anyway!"

It was dark before Soames met his employer, who had executed a *coup de main*. Addiscombe had suddenly descended upon Monsieur le Docteur Richepin,

who, reassured by Laure Duvernay's flight, had returned to Paris from Marseilles, where he had been ready to flee to cover in Algeria, at the first signal from Paris.

The crafty Parisian quaked under Addiscombe's stern questioning, until the lawyer frankly offered the olive branch. "I know the private life of the late Sir Aubrey Hawtrey," said Addiscombe; "and I will shield and protect you, if you aid me to recover certain papers which, I believe, fell into the hands of this woman, when the unfortunate nobleman died. You shall rest secure! And, in any further annoyances of Jarvis, Purvis & Jarvis, the family solicitors, I will protect you—if you aid me! Without me, you may be ruined! With me, you are safe!"

"And what must I do?" cried Richepin.

"Only one thing," grimly said the triumphant solicitor. "Take your card, and write upon it: 'Solicitor Addiscombe knows everything. Consult your safety by dealing with him.' Sign that, date it, and write your name on it!"

"*Volontiers!*" joyously exclaimed Richepin. "And I am to be free of all trouble?"

"Simply give me the name of your *avocat*, and I will write him that you have retained and paid me to defend your English interests! I will leave you the letter now!"

And thus it was, that Addiscombe was in a buoyant mood, when he received Soames's dubious report.

"She has a sister here, this bright one," said Soames, "and, with a little time, I may run her down!"

Addiscombe quickly gave his orders. "I will take the next train for Munich. You will find me at Ischl, at the best hotel. Go up and see that Howgate has this Texan wild man decently clothed. Tell them we will be gone a few days. You are to follow me, by the midnight train, to-morrow! I may need you, as a mere lay figure, to frighten la Comtesse Duvernay. Sift out about the sister, and I will have my detectives follow up the clews!"

In ten minutes, Soames was speeding away to Montmartre, and found the cowboy transformed into a singularly insignificant-looking individual.

"Texas Dave" grimly smiled, as he said to Soames: "Tell him I will give him two weeks, and then—I'm off for New York, by Havre. I have telegraphed to London to send my sub-manager on, and I've cabled to Don Andrés Armijo! So long will I wait, and, no longer!"

"All right, sir," said Soames, as he dashed away to the best line, to take the train at Gare St. Lazare, on the Ligne des Moulineaux, for Suresnes-Longchamps.

It was midnight when Soames entered the Hôtel de l'Aigle, but Henri, the head waiter, was on watch for Monsieur Edwards.

"The best room in the house, a good supper, and—serve it yourself!" cried the exhausted man.

"*Très bien, Monsieur!*" the snug *garçon* murmured.

"And, Elise shall set the table! She has been waiting for you for four hours!"

All the next day, Soames went over every detail of the hidden life of the two conspirators who had plotted the wrecking of Sir Aubrey Hawtrey's miserable existence.

Henri, the voluble, and Elise, the expectant, spared nothing of the details of the hidden life of the guilty pair.

And Soames, with a fine affectation of superiority, drank his brandy and soda while the history of the past filtered into his tenacious mind.

It was in the early evening that he mingled with the crowd at the Longchamps station. He had crossed the palm of the head waiter, and given Elise her infamously earned additional wages.

"Look you!" he said, sharply, "I want no babbling to anyone else! If there is, I shall hear of it. And you will be chased out of Villa Duvernay into the street, without a character! If you are discreet and silent, I may come back and give you a run over to London! And I shall know!"

The frightened woman pledged her fidelity. "Now prove it!" said Soames, as he carefully noted the address of the den where Laure Duvernay's sister had left her family, while masquerading as the housekeeper of the trap into which Prince Furstenberg had fallen.

With cautious celerity, Soames, reaching Paris, avoid-

ed every possible place where Ambroise Larue's spies might find him.

"I think the old man has outwitted them all, but no one but this crafty scoundrel was the prime agent in the mystery. If all else fails, Larue is good for a jolly swag, as he will not see his daughter disgraced. But never a thing does old Addiscombe get till he pays for it! He's a sly old fox, and he would throw me!"

It was a lovely June day when Walter Addiscombe left the train in romantic Ischl. His eyes rested in delight upon the superb gardens, and he marked, with the eye of a connoisseur, the windings of the River Traun.

Already the bathing season had opened, and the villas in the sculptured hills around Salzburg were crowded with the gay butterflies of fashion.

"Hotel der Kaiser—yes!" he absently said, as the gold hatbanded *haupt portier* seized upon the prosperous-looking Englishman.

All the way from Paris the lawyer had meditated upon the course to pursue with the audacious star of the baleful *demi-monde*.

"There is no use to mince matters," mused Addiscombe. "I'll try the effect of a sudden surprise." A man of the world, and a quiet debauchee, Addiscombe was as much a boulevardier as Raoul Hawtrey now wandering among the vine *trellises* of San Félicien. "Old Larue is undoubtedly on the watch now! He will be astonished at 'Texas Dave's' disappearance! And, if I appear near San Félicien, this shy bird may take wing before Dave Ross faces him! Why should I wait for Soames? He may be useful only to confront this woman! But, if Larue gets in ahead of me, the game is spoiled!"

To his infinite joy, the astute lawyer found many telegrams awaiting him at Ischl! Many useful daily reports from his own detectives at San Félicien.

"So, the honeymoon runs on!" laughed Addiscombe. "The birds are still within reach."

Six hours after his arrival, Walter Addiscombe knew the villa where Prince Furstenberg was gayly spending the opening of the season.

With a commendable prudence, the young diplomat

had filled his summer nest with its gayest birds, before the arrival of the Emperor.

Twenty florins to the porter at the lodge easily gave Addiscombe his cue. The absence of the Prince and his male guests at a wild-goat hunt of a week, told him that the coast was clear. And, Madame la Comtesse Laure Duvernay was a guest at the villa.

Dressing himself in the garb of the gilded world, Walter Addiscombe complacently drove through the lodge gates, when the silver stars were shining down upon the Salzburg.

His heart beat excitedly when, seated in the dainty drawing-room of the lodge, he heard a light step in the hall.

Bowing with the deepest respect, he stood for a moment, marveling at the insolently triumphant beauty of this *femme incomprise*.

"You have business with me, Monsieur? Impossible!" said Laure Duvernay, surveying the stranger with a sudden distrust.

"I have come from London and Paris solely to see you," gravely answered the lawyer.

"And why, may I ask?" disdainfully demanded Laure, her cheeks paling.

"To save you from ruin!" resolutely replied the lawyer. "Let us speak English, if you understand that tongue! The servants might overhear our French!"

Laure Duvernay had turned, with her hand upon the bell, to summon assistance. But, silently extending a card, Walter Addiscombe cowed the imperious wanton by his stern glance.

"Before you are mad enough to ruin yourself—read!" he sharply said. And then the excited woman, with a trembling hand, took the extended card.

Laure Duvernay read the words written by the cowardly Richepin, and sank into a chair, trembling and dismayed.

But, with a last effort, she sprang up, facing her tormentor. "If Adolph Furstenberg were here, he would have his huntsmen lash you from the gates like a hunted stag!"

"You forget that I am an Englishman!" bitterly said the lawyer. "Let us have an end of this foolish-

ness! Do you wish to be denounced as a criminal? Read that!"

And then Walter Addiscombe handed the frenzied woman, now at bay, the copy of the "Morning Post," which blazened the splendid marriage connection of the man who had so romantically succeeded to the Hawtrey estates.

With a low cry, Larre dropped the paper, and fell into Addiscombe's supporting arms!

"Calm yourself! For your own sake—there has been a foul crime committed!" said the astounded lawyer. But, the reckless woman cast him off in a frenzy of sudden rage!

"The liar! The coward! He has abandoned me! I will seek the earth over! And, I shall have my revenge! *Married!* Where is he?"

"Did you not know that Julian Hawtrey was dead? That this man has fallen into his vast fortune—to his title—to marry even the woman whom Julian adored? That someone murdered Julian, after you and Richepin had dragged the feeble Sir Aubrey into a hell whirlpool?"

But, the Comtesse Duvernay heeded him not! She had hardened into stone. "Where is he? Only tell me!"

"Not so fast, my lady!" growled Addiscombe. "You were to have me lashed from your gates! Find him for yourself!"

The maddened woman seized his wrists in a desperate grasp. "I only live for vengeance now! Take me to him!" she said, in an accent which made Addiscombe shudder. "A life for a life! Let me see him first, and—then—I will work your will! But, he must know who drags him down!"

"Tell me all," sternly said Addiscombe.

"Not until I have faced him before this country beauty! I shall see that you do not lie. Then—by the God above—he shall pay the price of a broken oath!"

The lawyer saw his advantage. "I leave here to-morrow," he said, coldly. "I only await your decision! You have to-night to think this all over! Fall with him, or—aid to revenge Julian Hawtrey's mysterious murder—cut off in the flower of his youth! I

shall be reasonable! But—if you do not yield to me, then—I will give you over to the authorities!”

“Where can I meet you?” demanded Laure, a wild light in her eyes.

“I shall be at the Hotel der Kaiser, awaiting you all to-morrow! I intend to leave for London on the evening train; but, if you defy me, I go to our Ambassador at Vienna to demand a warrant for you. I am the attorney of Julian Hawtrey’s estate. Those who killed him destroyed his will! There is justice to be done!”

“Go, go!” cried Laure Duvernay. “I will come to your rooms to-morrow, at nine. If you do not deceive me, I will go with you, face him, and denounce him! If this is true, then I will give him over into your hands! If you have deceived me, he will know how to defend himself!”

“If you tell me the truth, I will protect you!” reassuringly said Addiscombe. “If you attempt to evade me to-night, the world is not wide enough for you to hide! Remember!”

Picking up the card and journal, the victorious Addiscombe laid his own card upon the table. “*Au revoir, bientôt Madame la Comtesse!*” said the cool Englishman. “*Je suis à vos ordres!*”

“A pretty good campaign!” mused the lawyer, as he lit a cigar and sauntered down through the grounds to his waiting carriage. “I must keep this vixen away from ‘Texas Dave,’ or, the cowboy might deal with her direct!”

And all that evening, while the gay waltzers swung in the Kursaal, the stolid Englishman silently watched the merrymakers. He was revolving plans which brought to him the possibility of the sweetest revenge in life—to see old Ambroise Larue, broken-hearted, humbled in the dust!

“I am safe,” muttered Addiscombe. “My detectives will follow Sir Raoul, if he bolts, even to the North Pole! It is a social ruin to old Larue to have the stately bride deserted! Sir Raoul can take nothing away! There is but one course for me, and that is to watch ‘Texas Dave’ myself! If there is any real evidence, he has it! Let this scorned woman torture herself! She will tell all she knows! And—if she faces him?”

Addiscombe laughed grimly over the thought of a spasm of returning tenderness on the part of the French adventuress! "Judith Larue is the old man's darling! Left alone, abandoned, she would be the very monument of my victory."

And, while Laure Duvernay paced her room in the villa on the heights like a caged tigress, Addiscombe waited for the arrival of Soames, whose telegram even now was at hand.

It was noon the next day before the long duel of wits between the unyielding lawyer and the helpless adventuress ended.

The stormy heart of the Frenchwoman still hid Raoul Hawtrey's secrets. And Soames, chafing on his outer watch, longed for the dawn of his fortunes.

A sudden inspiration seized upon Addiscombe, as he vainly urged Laure Duvernay to a confession. "You have nothing—absolutely nothing against me!" she defiantly cried. And, though there were great, dark rings under her haggard eyes, the woman whose heart was secretly shaken was obdurate.

"I will end this matter!" cried the angered Addiscombe. "Here, as my companion, is Julian Hawtrey's valet, who for years was his dead master's only confidant. You may go on by Geneva to Grenoble and Valence, and I will have him conduct you to your false lover's hiding-place. You will find him there, with the woman who has supplanted you. *See for yourself!* I will go to Paris and come down by Nevers and Lyons, and meet you, armed with the witnesses and the proofs! Then you shall choose between your revenge and your own safety! I will use Richepin"—

"A dolt! An old idiot! He knows nothing!" cried Laure. "I alone can give a life for a life! But you shall prove to me that your words are true! I will go! After I see him in the arms of his wife, I shall not need your words."

It was in the dusk of the early evening that Soames respectfully escorted the veiled woman to her carriage. Addiscombe's luggage was already at the station. With a quick wit, he had suggested the sending of a telegram calling Madame la Comtesse suddenly to Paris.

"My agent will send it, before your trunks are

packed," said Addiscombe. "It will explain your sudden departure. Soames can meet you at the train."

When the valet saw Addiscombe depart for Paris, he asked for his instructions.

"Nothing, except to keep her in sight, for after she has faced her lover, she will naturally return to Paris, and there, we can easily trace out her sister's hidden domicile. Simply to keep them all under watch is my policy, until someone babbles and gives away the mystery. You have my address to telegraph! Do not let her feel that I constrain her! If she bolts, simply follow her! Here is a hundred pounds! And, notify me of all!"

As the lawyer hurried back to Paris, he dreamed over the strange entanglement. The cautious Soames had hidden his own valuable information. "I can easily read her woman's desire to upbraid the faithless one," sneered Addiscombe. "But, I shall not leave 'Texas Dave' a moment! For he either wants the certainty of the truth or some concession from Sir Raoul! The woman seeks only her revenge! She is a mad woman, and I believe that she loved the fellow, after all!"

The strangely assorted couple who left the train at Valence two days later attracted the attention of the gossips of the station.

In all the voyage the valet, traveling *en second*, had respectfully waited upon the woman whose easy luxury *en premier* indicated a high social rank.

But, after a visit to the telegraph office, Joseph Soames briskly approached his companion, with a new light in his eyes. "We are to wait here three hours, Madame," he said, "for the two agents who will conduct you to Sir Raoul Hawtrey's home. Let us go to an hotel, for if there is anyone who can guide you through this dangerous environment, who can save you, I am the man—the only man—and—we must understand each other! Without me, you are lost!" Laure Duvernay's anger rose at the presumption. "For God's sake, don't be a fool!" roughly said the eager Soames. "I have known all about you ever since I tracked Raoul Hawtrey to your house in Constantinople! And my master, Captain Julian, had no secrets from me! I waited on his brother, Raoul, two weeks in London,

when the two brothers were together, and I heard all this lady-killer's brag about you! Wait, till I tell you what I know!"

In half an hour, Laure Duvernay saw the gulf yawning beneath her feet! For, remorselessly, Soames recalled the whole association of the man who had slain his brother with the trembling woman before him.

"Does Addiscombe know of this?" faltered Laure, as Soames, a veteran in intrigue, traced out the whole conspiracy against the life of Sir Aubrey Hawtrey.

"No!" said the emboldened servant. "I have held it back! Sir Raoul Hawtrey may wish to purchase his safety! You say that Doctor Richepin knows nothing! True! And you are the only one who can be sacrificed! For Sir Raoul Hawtrey may save himself by the absence of direct evidence from the implication of murdering his brother! But, he will surely turn on you! He will accuse you of the robbery and pillage of Sir Aubrey, and defend himself, while urging both Addiscombe and the Jarvis firm to hound you for Sir Aubrey's early death. Whether Sir Aubrey was killed or not, Richepin only prescribed for him—Sir Raoul never entered the villa at Fontainebleau—and you robbed the poor debauchee, if you did not kill him. You are the one friendless one who will be surely caught in the net! A long imprisonment is your sure doom, if I tell Addiscombe what I know!"

"And, if I do what you would advise, how shall I save myself?" faltered Laure, who recognized the truth of all Soames's interesting reminiscences.

"They can never trace you back, save through me!" said Soames. "And, if you only have the nerve, you can punish Sir Raoul Hawtrey, and protect yourself!"

"How?" demanded the terrified woman.

"Make him pay over to you the same sum of money which you would have expected as the wife of Sir Raoul Hawtrey of Combermere! Say nothing of the murder of Julian! Ambroise Larue has millions of his own—millions more will be soon smelted from these horrible hills! Addiscombe only seeks revenge for Larue's behavior! With me at your side," Soames persuasively said, "you are safe! I can warn you of every move of Addiscombe! Larue would pay you nothing! He

would crush you like a worm, brutally, under his heel! Addiscombe has no money! Sir Raoul will not dare to talk if I hold my peace, for he will try to protect himself! But money—money we must have—you and I!”

“And your price?” said the helpless woman.

“Half of what you force out of Raoul Hawtrey!” deliberately said Soames. “I will see Richepin privately, and warn him that Addiscombe knows really nothing, and I will seal his mouth. In this way, Raoul Hawtrey shall pay you to the last farthing! He is already married! It would not right you to break that woman’s heart who knows naugh of you! But, your silence will be golden, and I will protect you, and Hawtrey must pay you through me! He can not elude us now! If you and I stand together, we will conquer, for you never went to America! That you were Sir Aubrey’s favorite, can not be gainsaid. With Richepin’s weak courage strengthened, with me at your side, this gallant Prince Furstenberg will champion you! It is for Raoul Hawtrey to face, *alone*, the consequences of his deeds in the Painted Mountains! Only the Texan and he are responsible for Julian’s myterious death. The struggle to the death is between them, and, at the last, Raoul’s ruin is your safety! Should the crime be traced home to both of them, old Larue will buy your silence! If the Texan alone is guilty, Raoul himself will pay, for he knows what you know of the way that the path was made clear to this vast inheritance!”

“And if he killed his brother, and, the Texan knows?” said Laure.

“Then, Addiscombe will hound him down, and old Larue will pay to cover up the disgrace!”

“We are comrades in life and death!” said Laure. “Save me from harm! I agree to all! And Furstenberg shall take you under his protection! I begin my work now!”

In ten minutes, Laure Duvernay dispatched a telegram to her watchful sister to pay off all her servants, place responsible guardians in charge of the villa, and to hide herself in the humble home of her infancy.

CHAPTER XIV.

SIR RAOUL'S MYSTERIOUS VISITOR—THE HONEYMOON
AT SAN FÉLICIEN—"MONSIEUR LE MARQUIS!"

Madame la Comtesse Laure Duvernay guarded a gloomy silence as she wandered in the garden of a secluded farmhouse, three miles from San Félicien, two days after her compact with the energetic Soames.

With a quick, self-protective instinct, Laure had telegraphed to Doctor Richepin from Valence. Her words were a two-edged sword to the old medical spider.

"*Hein!* I may have made a mistake!" mused Richepin, hidden securely in his consulting office, when he read the message:

"The English lawyer really knows nothing as yet. Keep silence, and I will aid you. If you abandon me, I will attack you, for disclosing the most sacred professional secrets! And Furstenberg will stand by me."

"She is fearless, this one," muttered the old man. "And, after all, she has nothing to lose! *I have!* She can go back and hide with her Constantinople friends!"

And so, the avaricious old Parisian thanked God that the burly Addiscombe remained absent.

But all was activity in the old Ardèche farmhouse, to which Laure Duvernay had cautiously been driven by night through the growing harvest fields.

It was a land of milk and honey, this picturesque, volcanic, pastoral region!

Soames had been absent on an all-night reconnaissance of the Château de Verneuil with the two detectives who had traced out Sir Raoul Hawtrey's retreat.

With a prudence born of fear, the stormy-hearted adventuress refused to talk to Addiscombe's secret agents.

"Find out all they know; don't weary me!" said Laure, as she laid her tired head to rest in the old farmhouse, while the detectives sought refuge in a neighboring cottage.

With burning eyes and a wildly beating heart, Laure

lay, now dreaming of a vengeance which should bring Raoul Hawtrey to her feet in a helpless bondage of shame.

Outwitted, abandoned, and betrayed, she knew now from Soames how the younger brother had gone ruthlessly to his goal, leaping across a murdered brother's grave! The quick-witted Frenchwoman easily divined the dead Julian's ambitions!

To be a lord of finance, to marry Larue's peerless daughter, and, to lord it in Sir Aubrey's home at Conbermere!

"And I, poor fool, made the way easy for him by hurrying Sir Aubrey to his grave!"

Her face hardened as she saw that Raoul had betrayed her from the very first.

"I to take all the risks, and he, to reap the golden harvests! Liar and traitor—meaner than murderer!" she voted him, in her raging heart.

It was easy for the beautiful Frenchwoman to extract the story of the arrival of the married lovers from old Père Antoine, and Jeanne, his still robust wife.

"No one knows who they are, *ces nouveaux riches*," grumbled Jeanne. "But the lady is as beautiful as a star; the gentleman a *militaire*, I should think. But the Verneuil estate has been guarded only by the steward since the death of *la belle marquise*. The old Marquis (the last of his line) died many years ago! Ah, there was a man! *Ciel!*"

"Is the house open to visitors?" asked Laure, whose lonely journey was explained by a search for an available country house in the health-giving ranges of the Cevennes.

"*Mais, non!*" decidedly answered the farmer's wife. "Not even the *maire* nor *monsieur le curé* goes there. They do say that the Préfet is coming to make a visit to these grand people! They buy nothing of us; the domain of Verneuil produces everything, and all their grand furnishing comes up from Marseilles."

Seated under a grape arbor, Laure Duvernay listened to the report of Soames, when the valet had returned from spying out the land.

"They are here," said Soames, "and have had but

one visitor. Bremond, the confidential agent of Larue, arrived two days ago from England, and has been in close conference with Sir Raoul Hawtrey. Our men here have corrupted a couple of the village workmen from San Félicien! There is a force of artisans now systematically retouching the whole interior. It looks as if Sir Raoul would make quite a stay. Evidently, he is acting under old Larue's orders, and is carefully avoiding somebody!"

"I understand!" gloomily said Laure. No one but herself knew of the solemn oath which bound her guilty lover to her for life, the guilty compact broken even in its inception. And then a fierce thirst for vengeance entered into her fiery soul! "He shall pay—he shall pay!" she murmured.

Reckless of herself now, for she knew that she could not be connected with the crowning crime, Laure Duvernay had already decided to spare Judith Larue! "Only another woman's heart trodden under the brutal foot of man!" she muttered. "No! I shall punish only the guilty! Soames is right! Let him drag the chain of infamy and fear for all his life! I will drain him of his golden wealth! He shall tremble to know that I am, viewlessly, at his side! He will never know when I can break in upon the fool's paradise of this beautiful bride! He shall live to suffer!"

She had listened to all of Soames's recital without a word of comment, and, at last, the bulldog Englishman, secure of his prey, faced her with the inevitable.

"How shall we attack him? There are but three ways! One is a visit! He knows me! He would at once take the alarm! You, left alone with him, might be murdered by this crafty coward. To send to him might cause his instant flight! To write to him to come to you, might bring him to your side, in the hope of pacifying you. And, here near you, I could protect you! Listen: the road to Tournon passes here. Bremond will not bide long, for he evidently will be anxious to go back and report to his master, Larue. Sir Raoul will probably drive his guest over to the station at Tournon. I can have all the roads watched! I will station these men to observe the departure of the guest. They are already in perfect league with

their confederates, who lives in one of the servants' wings of the old château. On his way back, a village lad can stop his carriage and hand him your letter. The only thin is—*will he come?* ”

It was an open question!

The two plotters studied long over the composition of the letter which was to bring their prey to the farmhouse.

With a firm hand, Laure had dashed off the summons:

“I am here awaiting you at Père Antoine's farmhouse. I am alone. If you wish to prevent me telling the whole past to your bride, come to me at once! Do not try evasion, for I will follow you, and then she alone, shall hear my story.”

The signature “Laure” completed the menacing summons.

“That will do!” growled Soames. “It will bring him on our ground! You can hide me in your own room, and receive him in the adjoining chamber. I can hear all! Be sure to speak to him only in English! As for the others, they will be a reserve, hidden near! I am well armed! I am an old soldier, and I fear him not! A revolver shot from the window will call in the London detectives at once.”

“Good!” said Laure. “I fear him not, but you must hear his lying pleading. After that, we have him in our power! It is the only way. Should he decamp, then let the detectives follow him up at once, no matter where they go!”

“And so,” dubiously said Soames, “we will go on direct to Paris, join this English lawyer, and you and I will then go to Sheffield and face Ambroise Larue! That will bring the coward back, for cant and prudery is the English cloak to every shame! The old man shall know that I would spare his daughter! And then Addiscombe, with his detectives, can chase Raoul to his final standstill! He will fear me, held in this reserve, and surrender! So, if we do not make terms with him, we will, with this millionaire father and partner. All Europe shall ring with the shame! For, as to my past, it is only his word against mine! I fear nothing as to Sir Aubrey's last days! Dead men tell no tales,

and I have locked up Doctor Richepin's lips! We French, *à la longue*, stand by each other! And you fear nothing?" said the wondering Soames.

"I have no longer a heart to break!" resolutely said Laure. "As for him, the coward, he shall kneel at my feet!"

"Then be ready," said Soames., "I will put the men at once out on the road! We can not talk over plans much, after the battle begins!"

While they were discoursing, two men were earnestly conferring in the library of the old château at San Félicien. Bremond, acute and self-controlled, was making his last notes in a memorandum book, while Sir Raoul, anxious and disturbed, puffing his Syrian cigarette, only turned his head to glance out of the open window at his beautiful wife, moving below them, among the *parterres*, where the Provence roses were blooming.

"It is absolutely incomprehensible," said Bremond. "I have sent my last cipher dispatch, and I must leave to-night. There is no one to inspect the machinery shipments but myself. The sudden disappearance of 'Texas Dave' is a mystery. Here Larue telegraphs that the Cattle Company's sub-manager has already left London for Liverpool to sail for New York! He evidently is in private touch with Dave Ross! The Executive Committee of the Cattle Company are sullen and silent! It would be useless for us to cable to Don Andrès Armijo. And there are but two possible explanations of this mystery. Either the Rothschilds have obtained a money control of the whole interest of Armijo and David Ross in the Cienfuegos, and are about making some private and secret investigations, or else 'Texas Dave' has been led off by Addiscombe and the insurance people, and they propose to make a scandal and hold out their joint opposition to your succession to this title. Soames and Addiscombe have also disappeared! Purvis, with the most liberal use of money, has not been able to locate any of the absentees!"

"You are right!" gloomily answered Sir Raoul. "This brute Addiscombe evidently resents the loss of the management of the estates, and he now seeks a

money settlement, revenge upon Larue, and a vengeance upon me for my innocent good fortune! He well knows that any scandal would break Ambroise Larue's heart! And all these devils are sharpening their swords in the night! What would you advise?"

Bremond paused, gazing long at the quaintly carved ceiling of the old library.

"Keep Lady Hawtrey in ignorance as long as you can!" quietly answered Bremond. "I will have to go West at once. Of course, I will watch your interests with Don Andrès Armijo, Ralph Evans will aid me, and 'Texas Dave' must finally reappear! There can be no flaw in the papers and proceedings! The control of the Cienfuegos is all right! But, I would remain quietly here on guard until Larue summons you home. See no suspicious persons! I will send you two private agents the moment I have reached Sheffield. Men selected from our own watchmen and detectives at the works."

"In case of any trouble?" sullenly said Sir Raoul, who instinctively felt that his guest had not disclosed all of his forebodings.

"If it is merely an annoyance," gravely said Bremond, "find a good pretext, and return at once to Sheffield! Nothing hurtful can reach you at 'The Priory.' If it is anything serious, go up to Paris at once, place yourself under the protection of the British Embassy, telegraph to Sheffield for Larue, and say nothing till he arrives! He will bring Lymington over with him! I rather fancy that the Hawtrey succession is the only possible ground for any family annoyance! As to the mine, it is tied up in our hands! And this quaint Texan may be indulging in some unexplained freak! As for Addiscombe, he may be going backward over your youth to fortify himself in his legal quibbling!"

"All right, Bremond!" said the anxious host. "I will follow your advice. I will telegraph daily in the cipher to Larue. And, remember, I shall follow out my orders. I will not leave here until I know that 'Texas Dave' has left Europe, unless Larue calls us home. As for any legal business, I will refer it all to Larue or Purvis. I will not write a letter or telegram to any

outsider! There is a mean scheme somewhere, and what it is, I know not!"

"We'll not borrow trouble!" lightly said Brémont, as the butler entered, announcing the *déjeuner*, and Lady Hawtrey, her slender hands filled with lilies, appeared, a very dream of radiant happiness, in the other doorway.

The splendid English thoroughbreds were champing their bits, harnessed to a light mail phaeton, before the merry party separated. Brémont, for the last time, walked around the terraces, gazing down at the sleeping valley of San Félicien, dreaming under the purpled Cevennes.

The old château, proudly planted on its hills, shone out in the summer sun, the copper-roofed turrets shining golden, the sculptured façade gleaming demurely gray behind its mossy mullioned windows.

The chestnut, olive, and fig trees hid the time-scarred rocks, where the archers had hidden in the old days when a De Verneuil had stoutly resisted Talbot's bulldog English.

Chapel and porter's lodge, the vast offices, and the great conservatories were all steeped in the languorous calm of the summer day.

Bee and butterfly, the singing-bird, and the leaping waters made glad the calm hour, while the soft lowing of the contented herds alone broke the brooding silence.

"I only regret, Brémont," said the handsome host, "that you are not here to help us welcome Monsieur le Préfet du Département d'Ardèche and the energetic Sous-Préfet of the Arrondissement of San Félicien! I shall not open the château, socially, until next year—in fact, I am only having the expert workmen discover the needs of repair and a very judicious restoration. Our neighbors, even now, are not aware of my seignorial rights! But, when you come again, the old retreat shall shine in gayer plumage!"

"Just the place for two pilgrims of love," sighed Brémont. "And may you long enjoy the paradise! I must be off now to the flinty *mèsas* of New Mexico and the pine-clad gorges of the Painted Mountains! We will all meet there later on this year, or else early next season," said the bronzed engineer. "Mr. Larue

wishes to make one family visit of inspection and complete the legal organization of the Directory in America."

Sir Raoul's face clouded. "I never wish to climb those gloomy Sierras again!" he slowly said. And then, turning to his glowing bride, the husband asked: "Will you ride over to Tournon with us?"

"I am completing my mental inventories of the old château," laughed Judith. "Thanks to the grace of the revolutionists, Château Verneuil was not sacked in the fury of '93, and I have many treasure chambers yet to wander through."

"Then I will see Bremond off, dine at Tournon, and drive home by moonlight," said Sir Raoul, as with a courtly grace, Judith Hawtreay accompanied her guest to the great entrance where the arms of the De Verneuils hovered in tracery of stone over the hospitable portal.

"Tell my father," whispered Judith to Bremond, "that I am perfectly happy! There is nothing needed on earth to complete my delight but a sight of his dear, old face, and a breath of the air of our Yorkshire lanes!"

Sir Raoul turned as they drove away to see the graceful figure of that gracious woman lingering there, her fluttering handkerchief the last signal of love.

Neither of the men saw the hidden loungers who noted the passage of the two comrades, but as the equipage swept past the old farmhouse where old Père Antoine was marshaling his bees, a woman's face gleamed out for a moment at the upper window.

"*C'est bien lui!*" cried Laure Duvernay, as she threw herself down, with a flood of bitter tears blinding her eyes!

"And now, *pour la rencontre!*"

For, resolute and quick witted, Soames had reported the passing of the man who laughed, all unconscious of the dark web which was being woven closer, blacker, every moment, with stains of blood blotting out the vanished golden threads.

"It is a land of love and life, of memories, and of sighs, this dreamy old Languedoc," mused Raoul Hawtreay, as he drove slowly home in the soft, summer

night. His haunting fears were all now allayed by Bremond's vigorous counsels, and he drank in the perfumed air thrown off in fragrant undulations from meadow and field, from wooded hill and sleeping copse.

And his stormy heart, he swore in that silent hour, was now centred upon his noble and loyal wife! "She shall never learn to despise me! Death first!"

The very heart of nature seemed opened lovingly to the clinging stars hung above him in the soft blue, while the artist hand of nature touched with rich shadows the moor and fell, the glen, and the winding river bed, where the sweet voice of many waters fell upon the ear in delicious rhythm.

His whole soul went out to the royal woman now awaiting him; for far across the fruitful fields he could see the golden gleams in the château, where Judith Hawtrey, the lady of San Félicien, awaited her lover-husband.

"She shall reign here like a queen!" he murmured. "Next year, there will be a happy band gathered around her, to share this earthly paradise!"

Lifted up beyond his guilty past by her delicious companionship, the partner of her high-souled ambitions, strengthened in her glorious wifely enthusiasm, Raoul Hawtrey had all but forgotten the lurid scenes of his sin-stained life!

Only when Bremond had spoken of the Painted Mountains, a waft of memory had suddenly aroused all his coward fears.

He saw once more the lonely hillside glen—that silent form lying there horribly prone, its arms helplessly spread out in the dull plunge of death!

He feared the spectral sight of that gray, ghastly face, and yet, he could watch once more the riderless horse careening madly down the wooded hillside slope.

What was it that vanished over the rocky cliff with a horrible grating slide?

Raoul Hawtrey shuddered as all his guilt came back to haunt him on this peaceful, summer night!

"She must never know!" he murmured. "For, she has made me the hero-husband of her stainless heart!"

A sudden exclamation from the French groom caused him to pull up the startled horses.

Before him, in the road, stood a lad, bareheaded, and clad in a peasant's blouse.

Thrusting a crumpled letter into Sir Raoul's hand, the boy mumbled: "She is waiting for you, over there, at Père Antoine's."

And then Sir Raoul Hawtrey, turning his head, saw a red gleam of light in the upper windows of the old farmhouse.

With a sickening dread, he descended and, lighting a match, read the hurried scrawl.

A mad impulse seized him! To leap back into the carriage, to dash wildly by, and reach the haven of the old château! Or, should he turn his horses' heads, and drive to far-away Tournon! There was the railway—a few hours would place him in safety in Paris! And there was always his old resource—lying, skillful lying! He could even telegraph to his wife to join him! And then the wide world lay before him!

But, the blood quickly came back to his heart!

"For Judith's sake!" he murmured, as he quietly drove the team up to the farmhouse gate.

The shock-headed boy stood at the stone wall, sullenly awaiting him, and then with a brief order to his groom, Sir Raoul resolutely strode up the little herb garden.

Pointing to a narrow stairway, the boy said, "Up there!" fleeing away in a sudden terror.

As the desperate man mounted the narrow stair his temples throbbed with a sudden rage!

Here, at the very gates of his tranquil paradise, was the evil genius of his past life, challenging him now like a specter risen from the grave.

A sentiment of sudden disgust possessed him! He saw his old loathsome self! The vile plotter of a dying man's moral murder—the associate of one who had been steeped in the dregs of every pleasurable vice!

Pushing open the door whence a gleam of light lit the dark hall, he started back as Laure Duvernay slowly turned and faced him!

Clad in a clinging robe of white, she seemed almost unearthly as her eyes sought his own in an imploring glance.

"You—what do you here?" he roughly said, pushing aside her outspread arms! For the woman, faithless to all, was, even now, faithful to the reawakened passion of the bygone years.

"To see you but once more, Raoul!" pleaded Laure Duvernay, forgetting her hidden auditor. "You left me without a single word, and—after all these years!"

"And you," roughly cried Sir Raoul, "you threw yourself into Furstenberg's arms! *On se console vite-ment!*"

Laure Duvernay had been sitting before him, her face covered with her hands. She now bounded up like a tigress!

"You *scélérat!* Infame! You made me risk my life for you! You left me behind to do your bidding! To make the pathway smooth for you! Do you remember your oath? A life for a life!"

"What would you have?" growled Sir Raoul, starting back. "You robbed your dying English lover! You are pillaging this Austrian fool now! Harken! I am the lord of San Félicien! Dare but to waylay me again! Dare to even darken my doors! Dare to approach my wife! And I will have the *gendarmérie* strip you of your borrowed plumes, and drag you away to the *bagnes!* You came from the gutter, and you shall end—in the galleys!"

He started back as an awful pallor made her face gleam like that of a living corpse.

"Fool!" she said in a low, hoarse whisper. "I would have spared this sweet woman whom you have taken to your bosom! I would have struck, alone, at you! Now I will spare neither! Begone, coward and fool! You shall pay—yes, to the uttermost farthing!"

With a muttered imprecation, Raoul Hawtrey stumbled down the stairway, for the enraged woman had thrown the door shut, in his very face! He was driving madly along the road toward the château before he realized the fatal consequences of his brutal outburst.

Once he stopped and turned his horses irresolutely, but then, his trembling hands dropped the reins.

With a smothered groan, he gathered them up, and in a stupor of dejection, regained the old château.

But no sooner had the rattling wheels proclaimed

Sir Raoul's departure than Laure Duvernay tore open the half-closed door to the sleeping chamber where the astonished Soames stood ready, pistol in hand.

"Quick, quick!" she gasped. "The horses! Get me over to Tournon! Drive like the wind! There are trains to Paris! *And now Addiscombe shall know all!* You shall see me place my foot upon this brute's neck!"

Ten minutes later, the *calèche* dashed furiously away, after Soames had whispered his orders to the cooler of the two detectives.

"Let Rawlins come along with me!" said Soames. "This fool will be back prowling around here by daylight! I'll send the *calèche* back to-morrow! Rawlins will come home in another vehicle, so that we can not be traced! Remember! Cling to him! Follow him to the North Pole! Telegraph Addiscombe everything! If I mistake not, we will all be back here very soon! This fellow has dug his own grave!"

Old Jeanne, standing in the door, with her hand filled with gold pieces, muttered: "Silence? Yes, I will keep silence!" For the woman with the burning eyes had whispered in the old peasant's ear her parting message.

Fast over the flinty road sped the flying horses, with Laure Duvernay leaning forward and urging Soames on!

There was but five minutes left at Tournon for Soames to purchase the tickets, while Rawlins sent the dispatch which made Addiscombe spring up in a victorious shout at Paris!

Locked in a compartment *en premier*, Laure Duvernay lay that night watching the flying landscape, and when she descended the next evening at Paris, the stony faced woman was the mere wraith of the dashing beauty who had defied Addiscombe at Ischl, in the far-away Tyrol.

Soames took him aside.

But, the stolid Englishman laughed grimly as "She's in a mortal desperate way, sir!" cried the valet. "She has neither eaten nor drunk since we left Tournon! And she will go to her hiding-place, the Hôtel de l'Aigle, at Suresnes! Better bring the Texan gent right over there, and she'll make a clean breast of the whole thing! It's a fortune for you and

I, anyway, and, if you are in for your revenge, why, she's the lady to dish it up to you, hot and hot. Now get 'Texas Dave' over there with you! I'll go with her and keep her humor up! You'll have to act quickly, or you'll find your bird has flown!"

"Not at all!" said the excited Addiscombe. "I've had four dispatches from Rawlins and Stover down there! This fellow Hawtrey is a cowardly fool—that's all! He's been mooning around the old farmhouse, trying to get a peep at her! He believes that she is hidden there somewhere!"

"Take my advice, sir!" growled Soames. "You don't know when a woman's mind will change! This one's an out and outer, and she was regularly fond of the beggar! But he's a cur, as well as a coward, that chap!"

Ten minutes after the flyer of the "Paris, Lyon, et Méditerranée" had reached Paris, Soames and the Comtesse Duvernay were seated in the train for Suresnes-Longchamps.

On arrival at the Hôtel de l'Aigle, the astounded head waiter showed "Madame" to her favorite apartments.

"Come to me the very moment that they arrive!" said Laure, her eyes flashing in an ungovernable fury.

By some indefinable womanly impulse, she had fortified herself in the stronghold of her happiest days to fight the last battle for her unsated vengeance.

"Here!" she cried, stamping her foot in a hysteric rage. "Here, I want to see them, all here!"

"Is *he* coming later?" hazarded Henri, as he sent the women in to minister to the excited woman.

"I don't think that he will!" muttered the philosophic valet, who now gloated over his assured fortunes. "It's no case of heads and tails, now!" muttered Soames. "An' the blasted fool could have pacified her easily with a little lover's jargon!"

Far away, at San Félicien, Raoul Hawtrey was pacing the terrace of the old château, in an agony of indecision.

Judith Hawtrey sat alone, and in tears for the first time since their love pilgrimage had begun.

Up at dawn, after a moody and restless night, the

tortured man had galloped down to the farmhouse, under pretext of having lost his pocketbook upon the road.

Early as he was, the keen-eyed detectives were astir, and the handsome rider never saw Rawlins lurking in his path, nor Stover hiding in the cattle-yard, as he dashed up.

A half-hour's battle with Père Antoine's peasant cunning and Mère Jeanne's assumed stolidity proved to the startled man his absolute defeat!

"The strange woman had gone away!" This was the sole reward of his questioning, and as to direction, "why, to Lamastre, by post."

This was the meager harvest. And both the crafty peasants poked his napoleons and blinked at him with sullen eyes.

"The other one paid better," murmured Mère Tornon. "We will get more by and by!"

Sir Raoul Hawtrey rode slowly back homeward, and then began his useless fight to deceive the woman who saw the "little cloud no bigger than a man's hand."

"Laure is a devil," moodily mused Sir Raoul, as he walked the terrace. "And, of course, this castaway will now write to Judith! Fool that I did not think of offering her money! She might have been silenced!"

And now his paper defenses all went down before the haunting fear of the blow which should bring his castle in Spain shattered around his feet.

"Tied here, I dare not move! No one to advise me, no means of communicating with Larue, if anything happens, I am defenseless."

And in his agony of unrest, he cursed the memory of that woman whose head had lain so often on his breast!

"Damn her! I should have lured her quietly away!" he fiercely muttered. "I should have spoken her fair! There are whirlpools in the river! Down there, in the black water, she would have held her lying tongue!"

Then, with a gnawing fear, which ate into his heart, he rejoined his wife to find that the shadow of the dark past had fallen across his threshold.

"Take me home to England," sobbed his wife. "Take me away!"

With a woman's divination of danger, Judith Haw-

trey clung to her husband, who, in an agony of tenderness, calmed all her fears.

"It shall be as you will, my own darling!" he murmured.

"When the Préfet has made his visit, we will turn back to England. You are simply lonely and unnerved." And then, with a fond eagerness, he kissed all her tears away.

But, late that night, Raoul Hawtrey lingered over some fancied correspondence, while secretly pondering upon his course. "Ah! If I had only Lischen Heffner's ready wit at hand to aid me! She would have followed this fiend and trapped her, for me! *But, it is too late now!* Duprat!" He thought of Duprat. "Perhaps the old man could see this enraged cormorant and buy his silence!" With a groan, he dismissed the mad project. "She has left no trace! Has she gone back to Furstenberg's protection? She will choose her own time to strike! For, she said she would spare neither!"

In a frenzy of unrest, Raoul Hawtrey stole out into the gardens! The first path led him to where, through the grated doors of the family mausoleum, he could see his mother's marble tomb, gleaming cold and ghastly beside the memorial of the dead Marquis.

"It was for you I struck!" he cried, in a sudden access of terror; and then, hastened back to hide himself in the halo of his noble wife's womanly innocence!

"She shall never know!" he swore, as he gazed down that night upon her sleeping face.

Even while he spoke, far away in Paris, with an unthinking access of fate defying jealousy, Laure Duvernay poured out to "Texas Dave" and Addiscombe the whole story of Raoul Hawtrey's desperate campaign to reach the place of the dead Sir Aubrey!

Self-forgetting, she unveiled their whole guilty past, and as the two men listened their faces grew ashen in the conviction of a cowardly deed.

Soames, listening at the door, entered quietly when Laure Duvernay had gone away to pace the floor and wring her hands in all the thirsty fury of the unrevenged.

"How to strike him down?" echoed Addiscombe.

"Don't follow that up! I'll strike him down *soon enough!*"

And then the frenzied woman laughed an awful laugh and fled away, tortured by the memories of the days when she had believed Raoul Hawtrey faithful to her in sin!

"It is time for you to act now, Mr. Ross," gravely said the lawyer. "You see that this man went out there with the avowed plan of secretly slaying Julian, but, only after the unhappy devil had fallen into the title. In this way he obtained, not only his brother's title and home estate, but, also, the vast future interests in the mine!"

"Two things bear against that!" stoutly said "Texas Dave." "The one is that this here Mont Brun, as he calls himself, could not have privately known of Sir Aubrey's death. The news came after Julian was killed! Second, that he, Raoul, as you call him, went down the ridge, and not up, on the morning of the murder, and he was there with the workmen when the Indians attacked the lower camp."

"Listen to me!" sharply said Soames, and the two men started as the valet towered over them. "I loved my dead master, and I swore to find out his murderer, if it could be done! Now, I know that the man we are hounding now, spent his evenings with the old French jeweler at Caliente. This woman Laure has told me privately that she cabled the fact of Aubrey's death to old François Duval. I found also that old Duval had sent a private message over to Coyote to the woman who was Raoul's mistress, even while her own drunken husband was dying. She sent a Mexican boy over to the mine with the message for Raoul, and the poor dupe was waylaid and killed going back! And Raoul took that woman away with him, and they traveled on to New York, *together!*" The two listeners were now trembling with excitement. "The same fellow who took care of this Mexican boy's horse at the mine was out hunting some stray mules on the west side of the range the morning that Julian was killed. And he saw Raoul ride along northward, under cover of the range, on the west side, just after breakfast, and also ride rapidly back the same way

two hours later! Why would he hide himself that way when he could have ridden along the ridge? And I can produce this man, and name him to Ralph Evans! Fear alone kept him silent!"

"Texas Dave" had been shaking like a leaf, while Soames, boldly facing them, told his story.

"I went to the telegraph office at Caliente and got a copy of the dispatch which was sent to François Duval. Right here, in Paris, you can get the original of that dispatch. It is dated a week before Julian's death, and you remember, Mr. Addiscombe, the news did not reach England for some days. It was delayed for this purpose. Right in there, is that woman! Rich-epin, the doctor, can prove this, and, if you face her with it, she will own that she sent the dispatch to Raoul Hawtréy. Here it is!" And Soames read out the fateful words:

"My brother died yesterday. A week for news to reach England. Notify and answer. The doctor is in charge."

"And," said Soames, "the cipher word 'Napoleon' was a secret signal! It was signed 'Jacques.'"

"Give that to me!" hoarsely cried Addiscombe.

"Not so!" sturdily said Soames. "Only after you and I have agreed upon our plan of action. You must not force this love-crazed woman to despair! Don't threaten her! She will kill herself, in a moment, if she has to stand any more brutality! He's a damned cool villain! This poor girl has only been his dupe and tool!"

While the two Englishmen went away into a private room, "Texas Dave" staggered to his feet.

"I've been blind!" he muttered. "All the boys told me that Julian never rode down the road to the freight camp that morning. No! This sly devil made a private arrangement up there with the poor fellow! If he did know of the death of this here Sir Aubrey, then he just laid for his brother and killed him! He decoyed him out there, and *killed him like a dirty coyote!*"

Addiscombe felt himself master of the situation when he returned after half an hour's absence. Soames and the lawyer had effected a partnership in interest, which

promised to the one the coveted money, to the other the long-desired revenge on Ambroise Larue.

"A square division, and complete protection for this woman!" was Soames's ultimatum.

"I will get Larue, Sir Raoul Hawtrey, and, perhaps, this Texan later in the net," mused Addiscombe.

But he soon saw that some strange revolution had occurred in the cowboy's mind!

"Go and get out your papers, Squire Addiscombe," fiercely said "Texas Dave." "Give me but ten minutes alone with him! I'll deal the game out to you square! If he can not explain one fatal thing to me, I'll give the whole business away. And, if I do, it will hang him higher than a kite! But, he shall have a square deal! Fetch me face to face with him!"

"The sooner the better," was Addiscombe's reply. "I'll leave Soames here, in charge of this strange woman!"

A week later, there was a splendid circle gathered upon the terrace at sunset, when the old Château de Verneuil was bathed in the glories of the dying day.

"It is one of the most superb places in Languedoc," said the Préfet, bowing low to Lady Hawtrey. "And you have everything in life to live for, *Monsieur le Marquis!*"

CHAPTER XV.

UNBIDDEN GUESTS — "IMPORTANT BUSINESS" — THE
MUTE WITNESSES — THE CURSE OF CAIN — "ONE
MOMENT TO SAY FAREWELL" —
BROUGHT TO BAY!

Walter Addiscombe sat alone in his room, at the little hotel on the heights of Montmartre, on the sunny July morning which followed the departure of the Préfet from the Château de Verneuil. His mind was far away from gay Paris, seething below him.

Baffled and disconcerted, he was now only awaiting a danger signal from San Félicien.

For his utmost efforts had failed to draw that un-

willing judge, "Texas Dave," further within his clutches!

Soames, at the Hôtel de l'Aigle, was still in charge of the restless Comtesse Laure Duvernay, who had easily explained her absence from Ischl, by "the sudden illness of a dear relative."

The strange woman had now relapsed into a sullen silence, her feline nature being exhausted by the outburst of passion which had led her to disclose all of Raoul Hawtrey's intended villainy.

And now, with the world-wise valet as her secret coadjutor, she craftily held Addiscombe at bay, stubbornly refusing to go to the English Embassy and make a legal deposition as to Raoul Hawtrey's plot.

"You have dragged me away from my villa at Ischl; you have threatened me with Doctor Richepin's disclosures! Let him tell all that he knows! I do not fear him, nor you, nor the law! And it is for *you* to bring this man Hawtrey to bay! If you can not prove that he did the crime, then, I am not in your power!"

Cajolery, threats, attempted bribery, all an old lawyer's arts, had failed to move the adventuress from her smoldering inertia of rage.

And so, after a long and diplomatic interview with Doctor Richepin, Addiscombe felt that he was in the hands of "Texas Dave," that queer compound of simplicity and cunning!

For the wary Frenchman had doubled on his own trail! "I told you, Monsieur," said the Doctor, "that I would tell you all that I knew! Read my card to Madame Laure Duvernay! It says only that you know all! *Enfin, nous sommes chez nous, ici, nous autres Français!* If you wish to know more, here is the card of my *avocat*, Maître Georges Dumain! He will know both how to answer you and also how to protect me! *L'incident est terminé.*"

At the most, Walter Addiscombe had persuaded la Comtesse Duvernay to remain another week at Suresnes, with the perfect liberty to go and arrange the affairs of her villa under the escort of the sly Soames, who had fooled his dupe, Addiscombe, to the top of his bent!

For, even this astute investigator was valueless to

the resentful lawyer unless his relation of the crime was verified in America, and the valet now sternly refused to give the name of the eyewitness of Raoul's surreptitious visit to the north ridge on the fatal morning of Sir Julian's death!

"After another week, I will reclaim the right to peacefully depart for Ischl!" said Laure Duvernay. "And, if you think that Furstenberg will not protect me, try him!"

Addiscombe acknowledged himself defeated when the morose woman said: "I have arranged with le Docteur Richepin to use the Villa Duvernay as a sanitarium, for the rest of my paid lease! I shall remove all my movables, and quit France forever, if I am annoyed by you or anyone from over the Channel!"

Addiscombe tried to hide his dejection after conferring with the counselor of the English Embassy.

"Sir Aubrey Hawtrey's estate? Ah, yes!" yawned that holder of a sinecure. "Well, he surely gave the woman the furniture and the lease all right enough—her papers show all that! As for his jewels, money, and the usual pillage—gifts *inter vivos*, you know! The woman was there at his beck and call, by his wish and will, and he was free to make ducks and drakes of his own! Besides, you have no evidence! As a rule, *dead men are somewhat reticent with regard to their personal affairs*, and, even singularly careless of matters of general interest! No, my friend! Give it up as a bad job! No one ever gets anything back from a French *lorette*! It is the unattainable!"

When, on this sunny July morning, Addiscombe read the telegram from Rawlins and Stover, "Breaking up to go back to England; send orders, or come at once," the lawyer uttered a significant oath!

"By God! I wonder if the whole three are playing a game together—Larue, Hawtrey, and this Texan mule? I will have my revenge if I have to spend my last shilling!"

Roused to action, he sent his man Howgate to inform Soames confidentially of the new move. "Let the lady go back to Ischl freely! I would like you to go with her, and stay in her service, if agreeable. Will

send Howgate with the news to you at Ischl! I am leaving Paris with 'Texas Dave.'"

"This will prevent Madame la Comtesse from warning Sir Raoul Hawtrey," said Addiscombe, as he surveyed the field for the last time. "For, woman-like, her forgiveness may hastily follow on this summer storm of passionate rain! After all, he is rich, young, handsome, and he may fall back later, into her clutches. She, at least, has 'a contingent remainder' upon his affections! Now for the crucial test!"

The lawyer sought "Texas Dave," sulking in his rooms, where that redoubtable frontiersman was finishing a letter to Mrs. Hannah Maverick Ross, Caliente, New Mexico.

"See here," moodily remarked Ross, "I have just written to my wife that I sail in one week from Havre, and I have just telegraphed the same to Don Andr  s Armijo."

The lawyer keenly eyed "Texas Dave" from under his shaggy eyebrows.

"I fancy that will change your mind!" he quietly said, laying down the telegram. "Sir Raoul Hawtrey is at last tired of honeymooning it, and he is packing to return to England! Will you not go over and see Larue?"

"No, sir!" flatly said "Texas Dave." "If you will take me to this man, I'll face him fair; but, I will not set foot on English soil again, until Larue has erected the works and kept his contract!"

"Your money interests will suffer!" persuasively said Addiscombe.

"You think so!" bluntly replied Dave. "*Well, I guess not!* Firstly, Don Andr  s Armijo will advance me all the money I want, without any interest, and with no security! Secondly, the Rothschilds will buy my quarter (in the rough) of the two mines as now consolidated on the basis of what capital Larue puts in as paid up, and a fair valuation of my interest made by a man named by me, by their own expert, and a third, to be selected by Larue and Armijo! You see, old Don Andr  s sent them the whole facts, and I showed them the working returns of the five hundred

dollars and not leave this room! I've got all the money I want for life, right in sight! *And, moreover, America's good enough for me!*"

"You will not go and swear to the facts of the death of Julian Hawtrey before the American and English Embassies?" said Addiscombe. "Remember that you may be called in question as to this mysterious death!"

"I've given you my last answer on that!" said the Texan, with a deadly, steellike glitter in his gray-blue eyes. "And, hark ye, Mr. Lawyer, if you connect me with killing Julian Hawtrey here—if you dare to breathe my name in that way—I'll blow your brains out on the spot! If you lie about me, after I go back to America, then I'll come back and do it, so help me God! And, in my own country, I'll face any man, from the President to a stage robber!"

"Then, go down with me now and see Hawtrey!" sullenly said Addiscombe. "I will take the next train!"

"I'm your man!" cried "Texas Dave." "Look you! Send all my stuff over to Havre to the Compagnie Transatlantique. I've got my passage for a week from to-day!"

"Very good!" gruffly said Addiscombe. "I'll settle our whole business here!"

"All right!" coolly said Dave, as he closed Hannah Maverick's letter.

All that day and until the next evening, the English man faced "Texas Dave" in the train, pondering upon the strange entanglement of the Hawtrey succession. "There is craft, as well as boldness, in this matter," said the resentful solicitor to himself. "Here Hawtrey openly goes back to England, and in the face of all the suspicious circumstances! He's a cool hand, and he evidently wants old Larue near him if Madame Duvernay shows up the past! After all, he was a single man then—a *bon vivant*—only a free lance! Time will repair all the damage he has caused to the elastic heart of the beautiful Laure! She already has another lover! And 'Texas Dave'—he has been inside their whole lives from the very first—a pretty good financier for an ignorant cowboy! If these two men stand fast, true

to each other, there is nothing to break their league. And—curse him—old Larue has never been in America! There is nothing to connect him with either of them in any hidden crime! He seems to have bought his way in fairly enough! And, for Judith's sake, this French-Englishman will swear the old man clear!"

The grave composure of the Texan never varied as the train arrived at Tournon, and then Addiscombe, in the gloaming, conferred long with his two waiting detectives.

"Nothing new to report," said Stover, "but that a great firm of Paris decorators has sent an agent down here, who will remain at the château and superintend all the repairs and restorations for the return of the Marquis next year! All the local nobility here have called upon Sir Raoul since the Préfet's official visit, and it seems that he has a French title going with this estate which comes from his mother."

"What's your plan?" calmly said "Texas Dave," as the three men moved along at his side to where a covered *char à banc* was in waiting, in hiding.

"I will think it over!" cautiously answered Addiscombe, as they dashed away into the leafy, summer lanes.

An hour later, the four men descended at Père Antoine's farmhouse.

"We will send the two men up to watch over the château," said Addiscombe. "And, one of them can bring us word of any sudden move to-night. In the morning, you and I can go up and face Sir Raoul together! That's my plan!"

"How far is it from here?" said the Texan, grimly.

"A half-hour's drive!" said Stover.

"And they will surely not leave before to-morrow evening! They have ordered tickets for the through train, to-morrow night!" said Rawlins.

"Keep the wagon, then!" quietly said David Ross. "I'll drive over, alone, to-night!"

"That's not my idea," said Addiscombe. "You owe something to me in this campaign!"

"I owe you nothing," said Ross, sternly. "We part company here! If I've anything to tell you, I will come back here! If not, I'll drive back *alone* to the

station! And you can carry on your coyote sneak-game around this man's house as much as you want to! I'll find him out, and face him like a man!"

At the wagon, "Texas Dave" threw off Addiscombe's detaining hand.

"I'll make no mistake!" he fiercely said. "And, if you make one now, *it will be the mistake of your life!*"

The three men were left gazing at each other as the light wagon rattled away.

"After him—*after him!*" hoarsely cried the enraged lawyer. "We will find both the birds flown in the morning!"

Stover quickly mounted Père Antoine's fat cart-nag, and trotted briskly away, while Rawlins reported to his master his rendezvous with the village workmen, in the temporary shop now erected near the château, for the extensive renovations.

"One of you must remain on watch to notify me here! If they leave to-night, let the other follow on! For I will soon be at their heels!"

In an agony of cowardly doubt, Walter Addiscombe waited until the midnight hour for news, and then, tired out, fell asleep in his chair, seated in the lonely chamber where Laure Duvernay had pronounced the doom of her lover! But, the grim game for life and death went on without him, as he dreamed of booty and revenge!

It was nearly ten o'clock when Sir Raoul Hawtrey laid down his pen, in the lonely library, and glanced wearily at the last page of his instructions to Monsieur Germain, the restorer of the old château.

Busied with her two English maids, Lady Judith, happy-hearted, was watching their hurried preparations for the happy home-coming.

"It will be a surprise to your father, my darling!" said Sir Raoul. "I have neither written nor telegraphed, for I wish the Lady of 'The Priory' only to bide quiet in her home until I can arrange for Queen Judith's *entrée* to Combermere! No one knows of our return but Purvis, and he can be trusted! The gentle old fellow is already busied with his own arrangements."

Brooding over her sudden happiness, Judith Haw-

they sat silently dreaming of the kind and fatherly face awaiting her—the stern old man who now walked the halls of “The Priory,” hungering for a sight of one dear, beloved face.

The hush of the summer night lingered upon the happy earth; the silver stars gleamed down upon the purpled mountains, and twinkled in the darkened pools of the cool, flowing river.

From the gardens below, the “woodbine spices wafted abroad,” and “the musk of the roses, blown,” lulled the lonely writer with their penetrating fragrance.

Pale, and with an expectant longing for the departure gnawing at his heart, Raoul Hawtrey had lifted his head only when the voices of the old château spoke out in the silent night.

He had suffered all the agonies of a hell on earth since Laure Duvernay’s disappearance! *When, how, would she strike?*

And, his nerves shaken by the continued repression, it now seemed as if he could hear the gliding of ghostly feet, the whispers of long-silent lips, in the deserted corridors!

Shadowy faces seemed to peer out upon him from the darkened corners, and once—yes, once—a painted face moved under his tremulous gaze! The truncheon in the hand of the old Connétable de Verneuil had waved him on to some far, mysterious bourne. He had lost his old-time courage; his ready wit failed him. He was defenseless and at Laure’s mercy! Suddenly, the blood left his heart in a reflux torrent, as the rude clash of wheels, pausing under his window, aroused him!

Leaping to the opened casement, he gazed out upon the terrace! He started back as an alert form glided from the gloom into the half-darkened library.

Only a student-lamp and a glimmering branched candlestick lit up the great library! Sir Raoul could not see “Texas Dave’s” face, for the orange glow fell only upon the scattered papers. But, he knew that the curse of Cain had come upon him at last!

“You—you!” stammered Raoul, his lips strangely dry, as he stood there without a word of spoken welcome. An awful calmness possessed him, for he saw

the iron gates closing upon him! It was settling time now!

"I have come three hundred miles to see you, Mont Brun," said Ross, his voice sounding hollow and far away.

Sir Raoul glanced at the door, and the steady, gray eyes followed him.

"It lies between us, as man and man," slowly said the Texan, as he dropped his tired head between his hands. "Between us," he groaned, "*and—a dead man!*"

"Speak out!" cried Raoul, seizing the frontiersman's right wrist in a grasp of iron. But, the unre-sisting Texan only gazed at him with his haggard, unflinching eyes!

"They're dogging you down now, Mont Brun," the cowboy solemnly replied, speaking in a strange, muffled monotone. "If you're in trouble, you might have trusted me—your pardner! There's that damned London lawyer and his two detectives over here, hiding at a little farmhouse!" "Texas Dave's" pitying eyes followed the wretched man, who staggered back, gasping for breath. "I'm in for a square deal, every time!" the intruder hoarsely whispered! "And, I swear on the Bible to give you a fair show! When I quit you to-night, you can fight your own game out! Here's what I've got to show you! Your brother, Julian Hawtrey, was killed with these two revolver bullets!"

And the lithe Texan sprang back, opening his closed hand! There lay the mute witnesses of the cowardly murder, and a reflected gleam from the table cast a bloody glow upon the face of the wretched man—the crimson brand of Cain. Hell yawned before the murderer!

"Judith!" he whispered. "She must not know!"

"There was but two of them pistols ever made in the whole world!" hoarsely muttered Ross, his eyes now fixed appealingly upon the startled murderer. "When they were fired, you gained a title, a million dollars, and, you got your high-born wife!"

Sir Raoul Hawtrey's face changed in a frightful convulsion as the clang of a silver bell echoed in the corridor above! Queen Judith was summoning her

maids around her! There was a solemn appeal in that sound to his awakened heart! "*She must never know!*" he muttered.

"Do you remember," said "Texas Dave," "that Captain Julian gave me his own pistol; you know that you carried the other one! *Either you or I killed him!* Say, tell me," entreated the Texan, "was it in fair fight? Did he attack you? That English lawyer will have the truth!"

"What does he know?" mechanically said Sir Raoul, his eyes still fixed upon the horrible mute betrayers of his crime.

"*Nothing!*" sadly said Dave, dropping into a chair. "Only that I was off the range, and that the doctors found these two bullets in the body! They've got them marked, weighed, and identified! We've got to face this thing out!"

"Where is this man now?" cried the tortured husband, driven to bay at last.

"Over there—he'll be up here to-morrow—and I've come to give you a fair show!"

"Wait, wait!" cried the Marquis de Verneuil. "I'll go with you and face him—now—to-night! Just one moment to say farewell to my wife!"

"That's right," heartily said "Texas Dave." "If it was an accident that threw this trouble your way, I'll stand by you—to the last! I'll throw these bullets in the river and stand by you!"

Raoul Hawtrey sprang to his side. He clutched the Texan's arm. "Promise me that you will not show these bullets until I bid you! They know nothing as yet?"

The voice of the desperate man was winning, pleading, in its vibrant earnestness!

"So help me God, you shall have the first show! I swear it!" solemnly said the generous-hearted Texan, who fondly fancied he saw the end coming—the end of all his bootless suspicions. It had been some strange *mêlée!*

"One moment!" calmly said Hawtrey.

"Texas Dave's" eyes followed the graceful form of the retreating man. "He's an out and outer, after all! I wonder if the big fellow jumped him! Julian him-

self never played any fair game as to this brother! He hid everything from me, too!"

A deafening explosion suddenly rang out, filling the room with horrid echoes, which reverberated in the groined arches of the vast hall!

"Texas Dave" leaped forward as the panther on the trail, and bent over the prostrate man, whose fall had overturned a heavy screen.

Then, the great doors were violently thrown open, and Judith Hawtrey clasped her arms around that prostrate form!

Behind her, the faces of frightened domestics clustered as the stranger held up a warning hand.

"Speak to me! My God! Speak to me but once! Raoul! Why did you do this?" shrieked the beautiful woman, whose loosened hair, flowing over her shoulders, swept the dying man's breast!

Dave Ross tenderly supported the gasping man's feeble head.

"*For your sake!*" he fondly murmured, with a last effort clutching her trembling hand with his stiffening fingers.

And he died with his pallid lips showering kisses upon that beloved token of his hard-won battle with life!

"Remember, you have heard nothing!" whispered the Texan, as the queenly woman fell in his arms.

They bore the senseless form of Judith to the nearest divan, while, with a stern self-command, the American bade them hasten for the nearest surgeon.

"Who am I?" sadly answered "Texas Dave," as the English maids clung to him in their terror. "Only his pardner—his friend and pardner—and, square with him to the last!"

The dark pool of congealing blood staining the old oaken floor told its awful story!

Loosening the dead man's vest, "Texas Dave" said, sadly: "*Too late! Too late!*"

And he sat there, silently watching, by the stiffening corpse when the surgeon and the village priest entered the library!

On the writing table, where the letters still lay scat-

tered, lay "Texas Dave's" own pistol, with which the unhappy man had ended his wrecked life.

Resolute, grave, and courteous, the American took charge of the excited household, and an hour later, he stood at the bedside of the widowed beauty with the silver-haired priest and the wondering village physician.

"You are Mr. Ross—" "Texas Dave"—are you not?" faltered Judith Hawtrey.

"I am," sadly said the American. "And, I would die for you!"

"Telegraph to my father to come here instantly!" said the half-distracted woman. "I must look to you to do all until he arrives. There is the law!"

"Send all these French people out!" said "Texas Dave," with a glance which made Judith quiver in her very heart. "I must first say something to you—alone!"

When the two men had withdrawn, Judith motioned to her English maids to seek the farther corner of the room.

"Can you trust me with your honor, like a brother? Can you trust me with the good name of my dead pardner? *For God's sake, say yes!*" cried Dave Ross, the tears now falling from his eyes in an unaccustomed rain.

"Yes, yes!" murmured Judith. "You are a man"——

"An honest man," sadly said Ross, "and, I've got a wife no older than you, and a boy to bear my name! Your father knows I'm square in every deal! What do you wish me to say to him, to the law people here?"

"What should you say?" faltered Judith, a horrible fear possessing her.

"That we were only going over there to see some people about the business of a lawyer who has been fighting his succession"——

"Addiscombe?" demanded Judith.

"Yes! He's a pettifogger!" said Ross. "And that Sir Raoul, preparing to drive out on these lonely roads, accidentally shot himself with his own pistol! It's not true—but, I'll say it—for your sake—for your father's sake! *For my dead pardner's sake!*"

Judith's eyes burned into his very soul! And yet her sobs choked her utterance.

"You must guide me, lady!" said the simple Texan. "I speak no French—the law people will be here soon! I will telegraph to your father that your husband was accidentally injured!"

"Is it right to do this?" said Judith, grasping his nerveless hands.

"As God is my judge!" said the sorrowing man. "I'd have died to have saved him! He was out of his mind! He owed me nothing, lady, and if he owed the world anything, he has paid it! Blood pays every debt! I've given him my word, so help me God, never to speak of his troubles, until he bade me! And so, my dead pardner's safe at last! There's no one can harm him now! I'll see these French people to-morrow, and, send them all away!"

"Do as you will!" cried the woman, who saw the truth shining out in the Texan's kindly eyes.

And so, Ross kept his lonely vigil by the dead man, long after the astonished doctor and priest had sought the village.

The flying feet of the messenger's horse racing past Père Antoine's farmhouse awakened Walter Addiscombe, as the man galloped on to Tournon with "Texas Dave's" carefully worded message.

It was two o'clock when Rawlins and Stover burst in upon the excited Englishman.

"There's been an accident, or a suicide, or a sudden death up there!" shouted Stover. "The Marquis de Verneuil, Sir Raoul Hawtrey, lies dead in the library! I saw the decorator start for Valence to send the Directeur des Pompes Funèbres over to the château! And they've telegraphed to England for the widow's father to come over here posthaste!"

"Is this thing true?" was the lawyer's excited cry.

"As God's own truth!" answered Rawlins. "One of the English maids told me that he had accidentally shot himself to-night!"

"Get me out of here!" gasped Addiscombe, with a groan. "I've lost three months' time and five thousand pounds! If that old brute Larue finds me here, there will be a murder!"

The *char à banc* was standing at the door, and then, flinging the old peasant a five-pound note, Addiscombe dashed away to the station with his now useless body-guard.

"It has been a game for high stakes, and I have lost!" growled the resentful lawyer. "He has now gone beyond the reach of any writ—far beyond gaoler or sheriff's bailiwick! And, after this, the Texan and Larue can never be touched! For Larue never saw America, and "Texas Dave" was at Caliente when the dead man lost his life! Gods! What a pot of money the widow has fallen into! I must get Laure Duvernay off to Ischl! May the devil drag her down to hell!"

A nun, hastily summoned, with her gentle mates, from the nearest convent, watched the long, sentinel strides of "Texas Dave" as he kept his silent vigil in the great vaulted room where Raoul Hawtrey lay—the room where, with rash importunity, his guilty soul was sent before the Great Judge, unhouseled and unanointed!

Pausing by the silent figure, "Texas Dave," with a reverent hand, removed the cloth from his dead associate's face.

He gazed long and earnestly at the noble features, now waxen in the mysterious *rigor mortis*.

With a solemn pride, he replaced the cloth, and touched the dead man's hand with a lingering fondness.

"Poor old pardner!" he said, softly, as his mind strayed far away to where the sighing pines shrilled their requiem by that empty grave upon the summit far away in the lonely Painted Mountains! "You played a lone hand against the whole world! You took the first rake-off! You went up against a hard game in this lawyer! But, you won out at last! Game? Yes, game as the best of the whole lot! It was the square thing for you to kill yourself—square by me, and, dead square by the noble wife! And I'll keep my oath to you! *You shall speak first!*"

In the early morning, David Ross stepped out of the mail phaeton at Père Antoine's door. The old peasant was smoking his pipe among his beehives.

And, he only shook his head warningly as "Texas Dave" sought to enter the front door.

After five minutes of expressive pantomime, the American laid a hundred-franc note in the blinking old man's withered hand.

"Skipped out!" he said, grimly. "Well, I'm rather proud of my pardner—he stayed in the game to the last, and, never flinched! Now, I've got nothing to say!"

On the way up the lane, "Texas Dave" met the sly Mère Jeanne standing in the road.

"*Same medicine!*" he said, as he absently handed her a fifty-franc note. "This will shut their mouths," he said, with a mental reservation, "to the amount of a hundred and fifty francs! The game's all made now!"

And then he drove sadly back through the French lanes, sighing for a ten-mile dash on his old raw-boned roan lasso horse!

"The pardner was the best of the whole gang!" he softly said. "The old man is all right, but, the poor little woman is immense! They shall never wring her quivering heart!"

Four days later, Ambroise Larue, escorting Madame De Vrees, and attended by Henri Bremond and Solicitor Lymington, were met at the grand entrance of the Château de Verneuil by the taciturn David Ross.

Without a word, the self-composed Texan led the father to the room where his daughter awaited him.

And then he returned, taking Bremond's arm, and led the young engineer out to the grand terrace.

"There's not much to be done now," said the American. "I must leave here to-night, and I think that you will find things in pretty good shape."

"What do the authorities say?" anxiously demanded Bremond.

"Nothing!" sententiously answered the Texan. "I testified that the death was probably the result of an accident! I fancy that Lady Hawtrey needs no more help. The poor fellow is down there, lying in what they call a '*chapelle ardente*'! I've stayed here and tried to do the best I could for my pardner's widow.

Now, I must leave here to-night, to take my steamer at Havre. I suppose I will meet you at Caliente?"

"Yes!" sadly said Bremond. "I am going out to take charge of the new works, and to make a report upon the working of the Bear Valley plant!"

"Well, I will see you over there!" sententiously remarked Ross, as he walked away and gazed sadly down at the chapel.

It was when the evening shades were falling that "Texas Dave," standing in the great *salon*, saw the doors open, and a shrouded figure approached him, with Ambroise Larue supporting the graceful specter.

"They tell me that you are going away to-night!" said Judith, her voice sounding strangely under the somber crape.

"I only wait now," said Ross, "to see if I can be of any further use to you!"

"There is nothing—nothing left undone—that a man of heart and brain could have done!" murmured Judith. "We shall meet again?"

"Not unless you come to my own country, Madame," firmly said the frontiersman. "I owe Europe no favors! I only wish to hear of your health and happiness! As for all the rest, I'll take care of it myself, with God's help!"

Larue searched the young man's unflinching eyes. Madame De Vrees led the widowed beauty away, and then, the old scientist turned upon the Texan.

"I wish to have a full account of all the happenings here from you, before you leave!" he said, with a lowering brow.

"Stop, sir!" quickly answered the Texan. "I have placed an unearned fortune in your hands! I am under no obligations to you, and, I do not care to go further into this sad matter!"

"And, if I insist upon knowing all?" was Larue's reply.

"Then, sir," steadily answered David Ross, "ask your daughter; for between her and myself in this matter, you can not come!"

Larue faced the young man angrily.

"One word more," said "Texas Dave," "and, I will

go to London, and turn my whole interest in the mine over to the Rothschilds!"

"There is business of moment!" the wrathful millionaire cried.

"Then your agent, Mr. Bremond, knows where to find Don Andrès Armijo and myself! I am square with all my pardners! I will put the ocean between us, as quick as I can!" There was that in his face which awed Larue to silence.

Alone and heavy hearted, "Texas Dave" was about to step into his waiting *char à banc*, having resolutely disdained the hospitalities of the Château de Verneuil, when Lady Hawtrey's maid led him into a little ante-room.

He was astounded at the magnificence of the pallid beauty of the woman, who stood there with her bosom heaving in some unwonted emotion. "I could not let you go, my brother," she faltered, "without telling you that my husband's death has made me *your partner*! Not only, has he left me a magnificent settlement secured by the family property, but both the interests of Julian and Raoul," she sobbed, "come to me! The lands of Combermere will go to the Crown, for there is no heir! The name of Hawtrey is now only a memory!"

"Can I do anything for you?" the Texan said, raising her hand to his lips.

"Yes, yes!" Judith whispered. And then, she glanced around, as if the very walls had ears. "Do you remember his last words?"

"I do!" said Ross, his bronzed face paling.

"Forget them—forget them!" Lady Hawtrey cried. "*For his sake!*" the weeping woman pleaded.

The American gazed long and earnestly in her eyes. "You would shield his memory?" he said.

"Yes! *Forever!*" cried Judith Hawtrey, in a strange exultation. "It seems as if he had earned the quiet of the grave—this man whose eyes you closed!"

"My pardner!" softly said "Texas Dave." "I'll be as true to his memory as you are! And, if you ever dream of anything clouding your past, forget it! I was an unwilling judge! And, the dead past lies buried with him!"

Lady Judith leaned her head upon the borderer's breast for a moment! He felt her womanly heart beat against his own! Something light as the fall of the rose-leaf touched his brow—for, she had kissed him an eternal farewell! And when he gazed around, he stood alone in the darkened room! He had not heard her parting whisper—"God bless you, my brother!"—but, he walked firmly out under the shadowed portal, and took his seat in the wagon.

As he turned his head, he saw Ambroise Larue standing there, with his arms opened in a last, vain entreaty!

"Too late—*too late!*" the Texan cried, and he turned his eyes away to the smiling valley lying below him, peaceful in its summer calm!

As the *char à banc* dashed over a tributary of the Rhone, something glittered in the sun for a moment, and then, sank beneath the current of the dashing stream.

"There go the silent witnesses!" resolutely said "Texas Dave."

He turned back to catch a last glimpse of the Château de Verneuil, upon whose turrets the sun was gayly gleaming.

"God bless her!" said "Texas Dave." "She's a true-hearted woman, and she stands there shielding the memory of the man who died for her sake! Rather than see shame rest upon her, he faced the awful truth alone! After all, a man—a game man—and one who only struck his luck in life too late—my pardner! But the devil in his heart never made him forget that angel by his side! He was true to her at the last, and he paid the price!"

Far over the wild Atlantic waves, in later days, "Texas Dave," riding the lonely path of the Sierras, often paused where the pine needles, lightly shaken, had covered the tenantless grave with their shining pall. "Forgotten—all forgotten!" he sighed, gazing down over the yellow mesa. "She is true and loyal yet! She knows nothing! She never will know how game my pardner was, when he was brought to bay!"

Brought to Bay

A NOVEL

BY

COL. RICHARD HENRY SAVAGE

Author of

"My Official Wife," "An Exile From London"



NEW YORK

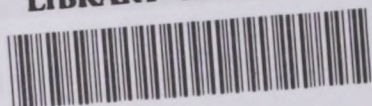
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